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THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

AN EXPOSITION

By

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Editor of "Our Hope."

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INTRODUCTION.

The Gospel of Matthew stands first among the Gospels and in the New Testament, because it was first written and may be rightly termed the Genesis of the New Testament. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, contains in itself the entire Bible, and so it is with the first Gospel; it is the book of the beginnings of a new dispensation. It is like a mighty tree. The roots are deeply sunk in massive rocks while its uncountable branches and twigs extend upward higher and higher in perfect symmetry and beauty. The foundation is the Old Testament with its Messianic and Kingdom promises. Out of this all is developed in perfect harmony, reaching higher and higher into the new dispensation and to the beginning of the millennial age.

The instrument chosen by the Holy Spirit to write this Gospel was Matthew. He was a Jew. However, he did not belong to the religious, educated class, to the scribes; but he belonged to the class which was most bitterly hated. He was a publican, that is a tax gatherer. The Roman government had appointed officials whose duty it was to have the legal tax gathered, and these officials, mostly, if not all Gentiles, appointed the actual collectors, who were generally Jews. Only the most unscrupulous among the Jews would hire themselves out for the sake of gain to the avowed

enemy of Jerusalem. Wherever there was still a ray of hope for Messiah's coming, the Jew would naturally shrink from being associated with the Gentiles, who were to be swept away from the land with the coming of the King. For this reason the tax gatherers, being Roman employees, were hated by the Jews even more bitterly than the Gentiles themselves. Such a hated tax gatherer was the writer of the first Gospel. How the grace of God is revealed in his call we shall see later. That he was chosen to write this first Gospel is in itself significant, for it speaks of a new order of things about to be introduced, namely, the call of the despised Gentiles.

Internal evidences seem to show that most likely originally Matthew wrote the Gospel in Aramaeic, the Semitic dialect then spoken in Palestine. The Gospel was later translated into Greek. This, however, is certain, that the Gospel of Matthew is pre-eminently the *Jewish* Gospel. There are many passages in it, which in their fundamental meaning can only be correctly understood by one who is quite familiar with Jewish customs and the traditional teachings of the elders. Because it is the Jewish Gospel, it is *dispensational* throughout. It is safe to say that a person, no matter how learned or devoted, who does not hold the clearly revealed dispensational truths concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the church of God will fail to understand Matthew. This is, alas, too much the case, and well it would be if it were not more than individual failure to understand; but it is more than that. Confusion, error, false doctrine is the final outcome, when the right key to any part of God's Word

is lacking. If the dispensational character of Matthew were understood, no ethical teaching from the so-called Sermon on the Mount at the expense of the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ would be possible, nor would there be room for the subtle, modern delusion, so universal now, of a "social Christianity" which aims at lifting up the masses and the reformation of the world. How different matters would be in Christendom if its leading teachers and preachers, commentators and professors, had understood and would understand the meaning of the seven parables in Matthew xiii, with its deep and solemn lessons. When we think how many of the leaders of religious thought reject and even oppose all dispensational teachings, and never learned how to divide the Word of truth rightly, it is not strange that so many of these men dare to stand up and say that the Gospel of Matthew as well as the other Gospels and the different parts of the New Testament contain numerous contradictions and errors. Out of this failure to discern dispensational truths has likewise arisen the attempt, by a very well meaning class, to harmonize the Gospel records and to arrange all the events in the life of our Lord in a chronological order, and thus produce a life of Jesus Christ, our Lord, as we have a descriptive life of Napoleon or other great men. The Holy Spirit has never undertaken to produce a life of Christ. That is very evident by the fact that the greater part of the life of our Lord is passed over in silence. Nor was it in the mind of the Spirit to report all the words and miracles and the movements of our Lord, or to record all the events which took place during His public

ministry, and to arrange them in a chronological order. What presumption, then, in man to attempt to do that which the Holy Spirit never attempted! If the Holy Spirit never intended that the records of our Saviour should be strictly chronological, how vain and foolish then, if not more, the attempt to bring out a harmony of the different Gospels! One has correctly said, "The Holy Spirit is not a reporter, but an editor." This is well said. A reporter's business is to report events as they happen. The editor arranges the material in a way to suit himself, and leaves out or makes comment just as he thinks best. This the Holy Spirit has done in giving four Gospels, which are not a mechanical reporting of the doings of a person called Jesus of Nazareth, but the spiritual unfoldings of the blessed person and work of our Saviour and Lord, as King of the Jews, servant in obedience, Son of Man and the only begotten of the Father. We cannot enter more deeply into this now, but in the exposition of our Gospel we shall illustrate this fact.

In the Gospel of Matthew, as the Jewish Gospel, speaking of the King and the kingdom, dispensational throughout, treating of the Jews, the Gentiles and even the church of God in anticipation, as no other Gospel does, everything must be looked upon from the dispensational point of view. All the miracles recorded, the words spoken, the events which are given in their peculiar setting, every parable, every chapter from beginning to end, are first of all to be looked upon as foreshadowing and teaching dispensational truths. This is the right key to the Gospel of Matthew. It is likewise a significant fact that in the condition of the people

Israel, with their proud religious leaders rejecting the Lord, their King and the threatened judgment in consequence of it, is a true photograph of the end of the present dispensation, and in it we shall see the coming doom of Christendom. The characteristics of the times, when our Lord appeared among His people, who were so religious, self-righteous, being divided into different sects, Ritualists (Pharisees) and Rationalists (Sadducees—Higher Critics), following the teachings of men, occupied with man-made creeds and doctrines, etc., and all nothing but apostasy, are exactly reproduced in Christendom, with its man-made ordinances, rituals and rationalistic teachings. We hope to follow out this thought in our exposition.

There are seven great dispensational parts which are prominent in this Gospel and around which everything is grouped. We will briefly review them.

I.—**The King.** The Old Testament is full of promises which speak of the coming, not alone of a deliverer, a sin-bearer, but of the coming of a King, King Messiah as He is still called by orthodox Jews. This King was eagerly expected, hoped for and prayed for by the pious in Israel. It is still so with many Jews in our days. The Gospel of Matthew proves that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly the promised King Messiah. In it we see Him as King of the Jews, everything shows that He is in truth the royal person, of whom Seers and Prophets, as well as inspired Psalmists, wrote and sang. First it would be necessary to prove that He is legally the King. This is seen in the first chapter,

where a genealogy is given which proves His royal descent. The beginning is, "Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham."* It goes back to Abraham and there it stops, while in Luke the genealogy reaches up to Adam. In the Gospel of Matthew He is seen as Son of David, His royal descent; Son of Abraham, according to the flesh from the seed of Abraham.

The coming of the Magi is only recorded in Matthew. They come to worship the new born King of the Jews. His royal birthplace, David's city, is given. The infant is worshipped by the representatives of the Gentiles and they do homage indeed before a true King, though the marks of poverty were around Him. The gold they gave speaks of His royalty. Every true King has a herald, so the King Messiah. The forerunner appears and in Matthew his message to the nation is that "The Kingdom of heaven has drawn nigh"; the royal person so long foretold is about to appear and to offer that Kingdom. When the King who was rejected comes again to set up the Kingdom, He will be preceded once more by a herald who will declare His coming among His people Israel, even Elijah the prophet. In the fourth chapter we see the King tested and proven that He is the King. He is tested thrice, once as Son of Man, as Son of God and as the King Messiah. After the testing, out of which He comes forth a complete victor,

*We use a translation of the New Testament which was made years ago by J. N. Darby, and which for correctness is the very best we have ever seen. We can heartily recommend it to our readers. It is published in New York City. Price 60 cents a copy. Order from 80 Second Street, N. Y.

He begins His ministry. The Sermon on the Mount (we shall use the phrase though it is not scriptural) is given in Matthew in full. Mark and Luke report it only in fragments and John has not a word of it. This should at once determine the status of the three chapters which contain this discourse. It is teaching concerning the Kingdom, the magna charta of the Kingdom and all its principles. Such a kingdom in the earth, with subjects who have all the characteristics of the royal requirements laid down in this discourse will yet be. If Israel had accepted the King it would then have come, but the kingdom has been postponed. The Kingdom will at last come with a righteous nation as a center, but Christendom is not that kingdom. In this wonderful discourse the Lord speaks as the King and as the Lawgiver, who expounds the law which is to rule His Kingdom. From the eighth to the twelfth chapters, we see the royal manifestations of Him who is Jehovah manifested in the flesh. This part especially is interesting and very instructive, because it gives in a series of miracles, the dispensational outline of the Jew, the Gentile, and what comes after the present age is past.

As King He sends out His servants and endues them with kingdom power, preaching likewise the nearness of the kingdom. After the tenth chapter the rejection begins followed by His teachings in parables, the revealing of secrets. He is presented to Jerusalem as King, and the Messianic welcome is heard, "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of Jehovah." After that His suffering and His death. In all His Kingly character is brought out, and the

Gospel closes abruptly, and has nothing to say of His ascension to heaven; but the Lord is, so to speak, left on the earth with power, all power in heaven and on earth. In this closing it is seen that He is the King. He rules in heaven now and on the earth when He comes again.

II.—**The Kingdom.** The phrase Kingdom of the Heavens occurs **only** in the Gospel of Matthew. We find it thirty-two times. What does it mean? Here is the failure of the interpretation of the Word, and all error and the confusion around us springs from the false conception of the Kingdom of the Heavens. It is generally taught and understood that the term Kingdom of the Heavens means the church, and thus the church is thought to be the true Kingdom of the Heavens, established in the earth, and conquering the nations and the world. The Kingdom of the Heavens is *not* the church, and the church is *not* the Kingdom of the Heavens. This is a very vital truth. May the exposition of this Gospel be used in making this distinction very clear in the minds of our readers. When our Lord speaks of the Kingdom of the Heavens up to the twelfth chapter He does not mean the church, but the Kingdom of the Heavens in its Old Testament sense, as it is promised to Israel, to be established in the land, with Jerusalem for a center, and from there to spread over all the nations and the entire earth. What did the pious, believing Jew expect according to the Scriptures? He expected (and still expects) the coming of the King Messiah, who is to occupy the throne of His father David. He was

expected to bring judgment for the enemies of Jerusalem, and bring together the outcasts of Israel. The land would flourish as never before; universal peace would be established; righteousness and peace in the knowledge of the glory of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. All this in the earth with the land, which is Jehovah's land, as fountain head, from which all the blessings, the streams of living waters, flow. A temple, a house of worship, for all nations was expected to stand in Jerusalem, to which the nations would come to worship the Lord. This is the Kingdom of the Heavens as promised to Israel and as expected by them. It is all earthly. The church, however, is something entirely different. The hope of the church, the place of the church, the calling of the church, the destiny of the church, the reigning and ruling of the church is not earthly, but it is heavenly. Now the King long expected had appeared, and He preached the Kingdom of the Heavens having drawn nigh, that is, this promised earthly kingdom for Israel. When John the Baptist preached, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of the Heavens has drawn nigh," he meant the same. It is all wrong to preach the Gospel from such a text and state that the sinner is to repent and then the Kingdom will come to him. A very well known English teacher of spiritual truths gave not long ago in this country a discourse on the mistranslated text, "The Kingdom of God is within you," and dwelt largely on the fact that the Kingdom is within the believer. The context shows that this is erroneous, and the true translation is "The Kingdom is *among you;*" that is, in the person of the King.

Now if Israel had accepted the testimony of John, and had repented, and if they had accepted the King, the Kingdom would have come, but now it has been postponed till Jewish disciples will pray again in preaching the coming of the Kingdom, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven." That will be after the church has been removed to the heavenly places. The history of the Kingdom is given in the second chapter. The Gentiles first, and Jerusalem does not know her King and is in trouble on account of Him.

III.—**The King and the Kingdom is rejected.** This is likewise foretold in the Old Testament, Isaiah liii, Daniel ix:25, Psalm xxii., etc. It is also seen in types, Joseph, David and others. The herald of the King is first rejected and ends in the prison, being murdered. This speaks of the rejection of the King Himself. In no other Gospel is the story of the rejection so completely told as here. It begins in Galilee, in His own city, and ends in Jerusalem. The rejection is not human but it is *Satanic*. All the wickedness and depravity of the heart is uncovered and Satan revealed throughout. All classes are concerned in the rejection. The crowds who had followed Him and were fed by Him, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the priests, the chief priests, the high priest, the elders. At last it becomes evident that they knew Him who He was, their Lord and their King, and wilfully they delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. The story of the cross in Matthew, too, brings out the darkest side of the rejection. Thus prophecy is seen fulfilled in the rejection of the King.

IV.—**The rejection of His Earthly People and their Judgment.** This is another theme of the Old Testament which is very prominent in the Gospel of Matthew. They rejected Him and He leaves them, and judgment falls upon them. In the eleventh chapter He reproaches the cities in which most of His works of power had taken place, because they had not repented. At the end of the twelfth chapter He denies His relations and refuses to see His own, while in the beginning of the thirteenth He leaves the house and goes down to the sea, the latter term typifies the nations. After His royal presentation to Jerusalem the next day early in the morning He curses the fig tree, which foreshadows Israel's national death, and after He uttered His two parables to the chief priests and elders, He declares that the Kingdom of God is to be taken away from them and is to be given to a nation which is to bring the fruit thereof. The whole twenty-third chapter contains the woes upon the Pharisees, and at the end He speaks to Jerusalem and declares that their house is to be left desolate till they shall say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

V.—**The mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens.** The kingdom has been rejected by the people of the kingdom and the King Himself has left the earth. During His absence the Kingdom of the Heavens is in the hands of men. There is then the kingdom in the earth in an entirely different form than it was revealed in the Old Testament, the mysteries of the kingdom hidden from the world's foundation are now made known. This we learn in Matthew

xiii, and here, too, we have at least a glimpse of the church. Again it is to be understood that both are not identical. But what is the kingdom in its mystery form? The seven parables will teach this to us. It is seen there in an evil mixed condition. The church, the one body, is not evil, for the church is composed of those who are beloved of God, called saints, but Christendom, including all professors, is properly that Kingdom of the Heavens in the thirteenth chapter. The parables bring out what may be termed the history of Christendom. It is a history of failure, becoming that which the King never meant it to be, the leaven of evil, indeed, leavening the whole lump, and thus it continues till the King comes back, when all the offences will be gathered out of the kingdom. The parable of the pearl alone speaks of the church.

VI.—**The Church.** In no other Gospel is anything said of the church except in the Gospel of Matthew. In the sixteenth chapter Peter gives his testimony concerning the Lord, revealed to him from the Father, who is in the heavens. The Lord tells him that on this rock I will build My assembly—church—and hades' gates shall not prevail against it. It is not I *have built,* but I *will* build My church. Right after this promise He speaks of His suffering and death. The transfiguration which follows the first declaration of His coming death, speaks of the glory which will follow, and is a type of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter i:16). Much that follows after the declaration of the Lord concerning the building of the church is to be applied to the church.

VII.—**The Mount of Olivet Discourse. Prophetic Teachings Concerning the End of the Age.** This discourse was given to the disciples after the Lord had spoken His last word to Jerusalem. It is one of the most remarkable sections of the entire Gospel. We find it in the 24th and 25th chapters. In it the Lord teaches concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God; Christendom is in it likewise. The order is different. The Gentiles stand last. The reason for that is because the church will be removed first from the earth and the professors of Christendom will be left, and are nothing but Gentiles and concerned in the judgment of nations as made known by the Lord. The first part of Matthew xxiv is Jewish throughout. From the fourth to the forty-fifth verse we have a most important prophecy, which gives the events which follow after the church is taken from the earth. The Lord takes here many of the Old Testament prophecies and blends them in one great prophecy. The history of the last week in Daniel is here. The middle of the week after the first three years and a half is verse 15. Revelation, chapters vi-xix is all contained in these words of our Lord. He gave, then, the same truths, only more enlarged and in detail, from heaven as a last word and warning. Three parables follow in which the saved and the unsaved are seen. Waiting and serving is the leading thought. Reward and casting out into outward darkness the twofold outcome. This, then, finds an application in Christendom and the church. The ending of Matthew xxv is the judgment of nations. This is not the universal judgment, a popular term in Christen-

dom, but unscriptural, but it is the judgment of the nations at the time when our Lord as Son of Man sits upon the throne of His glory.

Many of the most interesting facts in the Gospel, the peculiar quotations from the Old Testament, the perfect structure, etc., etc., we cannot give in this introduction and outline, but we hope to bring them before us in our exposition. May, then, the Spirit of Truth guide us into all the truth.

CHAPTER I.

The first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is divided into two parts. In the first to the seventeenth verse we find the genealogy of Jesus Christ, and in the last part of the chapter the account of the birth of the promised One. In the second half we see Him as Son of God and Saviour, while in the first, in the genealogy, His royal descent is proven. He is the rightful heir to David's throne, and thus His Kingship is legally established.

The two Greek words with which this Gospel begins are *"Biblos geneseos,"* the book of the generation, which corresponds to a similar Old Testament expression frequently found in the Scriptures (Genesis vi:9, etc.) The very beginning of this Gospel shows clearly that this is the Jewish Gospel. The question of genealogy is an all important one for the Jew. The genealogy which appears in the Gospel of Luke does not stand there in the beginning, but it comes in with the third chapter, after the account of the Saviour's birth, and the ministry of the forerunner, and when He begins His public ministry. In the Gospel of Luke He is the Son of man, and not as in Matthew, the King. In Luke it is a going backward clear to Adam, while in the genealogy in Matthew it is the opposite; not like in Luke, beginning with His earthly name, Jesus, but beginning with Abraham, it goes forward till the end is reached in Joseph, the husband

of Mary. The first verse in Matthew may be termed a superscription for the genealogy which follows, Book of generation of Jesus Christ, "Son of David, Son of Abraham." How truly He is all that, is now to be established, Son of David, because a King is promised to rule in righteousness upon the throne of His father David; but in a larger sense, Seed of Abraham, through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and the nations to receive spiritual blessings. How incorrect it would have been if it had said, Book of generation of Jesus Christ, Son of Abraham, Son of David. That would have been the rendering by man, but the Holy Spirit puts David here before Abraham, though in the genealogy itself Abraham is the head, the first one. Jesus Christ is first the Son of David, and as such He is to be presented to the nation Israel, as King, and to be rejected by them. He is after that in the wider sense the One through whom the promises of blessing in Abraham to the nations are to be fulfilled. How clearly this proves the verbal inspiration! Indeed, if there is no verbal inspiration there is no inspiration at all.

It is not rarely the case that readers of the New Testament have asked themselves why all these names appear in the first chapter. We have answered many questions and have written numerous letters during the last eight years in answer to inquiries from the Jews on account of the genealogy, as it appears here, and the apparent contradictions and discrepancies between Matthew and Luke. Many a Jew has come and asked, Why must a man have two genealogies, and which is the right one? When the Jew takes the New

Testament and opens it with Matthew, he finds himself upon familiar ground. It is the first question with him, if Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, Son of David, it must be proven by a genealogy. Does the New Testament, in the genealogies in Matthew and in Luke, prove this? is the important question the Jew asks. We have often asked the Jewish inquirer, Supposing Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, not the Son of David, then you would expect the coming of a Messiah who is a Son of David, born in Bethlehem; how could that coming Messiah prove that he is really the Son of David, when your genealogical registers have been lost centuries ago? Others, too, have had difficulty on account of these two genealogies. We will state the case and what they teach in a few words.

In the genealogy of Matthew Jesus Christ is shown to be the King legally; in the Gospel of Luke we have His genealogy as the Son of Man, and as such linked with the whole race. The genealogy in Matthew proves that Joseph is a descendant of David through the house of *Solomon.* The one in the Gospel of Luke proves that Mary, the virgin, is likewise a descendant of David, but not through the house of *Solomon;* she is connected with David through the house of *Nathan.* The Messiah was to be born of a virgin, one who must be a descendant of David. But a woman has no right to the throne. As the son of the virgin alone He could not have a legal right to the throne. For this reason to make the One begotten in her of the Holy Ghost, the rightful heir to the throne of David in the eyes of the nation, the virgin had to be the wife of a man who had a perfect,

unchallenged right to the throne. Now the genealogy in Matthew shows that Joseph is a son of David, and thus entitled to the throne, therefore Jesus is *legally* in this way heir to the throne. He is the legal descendant and heir of David through Joseph, but never *Joseph's Son.* He was supposed by the people *to be* the Son of Joseph. "And Jesus Himself, when He began to teach, was about thirty years of age; being, as was supposed, the Son of Joseph" (Luke iii:23). "And they said, Is not this the Son of Joseph?" (Luke iv:22). His claim as being truly the Son of David was therefore never disputed. Now if He had been the Son of Joseph according to the flesh, He would never be and *could* never be our Saviour. The 51st Psalm would then have found an application. "I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." On the other hand, if He had been the Son of Mary, without she being legally the wife of a Son of David, the Jews would have rejected His claim from the very outset. We see then that legally He was the Son of Joseph; in His humanity, He is the Son of Mary, and then one step higher, as we read in the closing verses, He is the Son of God. The two genealogies show Him as King—Son of man and Son of God—as the One born of Mary, but begotten in her of the Holy Ghost.

The genealogy in Matthew speaks of decadence. Corruption, ruin and hopelessness is clearly brought out in it. It begins with Abraham. And as generation after generation is mentioned, it puts before us the shameful history of Israel, with their unbelief, apostasy and judgments. At last it becomes all dark and all hopeless as far as Israel is con-

cerned. Like Sarah's womb, as she indeed stands in type for the nation, the whole nation was dead, no hope, all ruin and corruption. But God can bring life from the dead. "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, come of woman, come under the law, that He might redeem those under the law, that we might receive sonship" (Gal. iv:4). It is so with this present dispensation, for after awhile when the Lord has taken to Himself His Church, darkness, ruin and evil will prevail, and in the darkest hour of Israel's believing remnant and in the history of the world, the Firstborn will come again into the habitable world surrounded by worshipping angels (Heb. i:6).

The division of the genealogy is threefold. From Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away into the Babylonian captivity, and from the carrying away into Babylon to Christ (verse 17). In each division are fourteen generations, twice seven in each division. This brings in perfect harmony and order, as He who has given it all is the Spirit of order and not disorder (1 Cor. xiv:33). Seven is a highly symbolical number, peculiar to Israel. Much of the history of Israel is divided into seven; the seventy years of Captivity, the seventy prophetic weeks in Daniel, the last week still future composed of seven years, etc., are well-known facts to every reader of the Word. Here it is three times twice seven, which means fulfillment and completeness.

A closer investigation shows at once that a number of generations have been left out. Attempts have been made to explain this in different ways. Many poor, shortsighted men have put it down as an error, and higher critics and unbe-

lievers have pointed it out as an argument against the inspiration of the Word, and as an example of the contradictions, which, according to them, exist in the Scriptures. Others have charged Matthew with ignorance, and that by not knowing any better, he left these generations out. As a Jew, he was, without question, well acquainted with the Old Testament writings. He had full access to all the collections of books which we term Old Testament. Out of the historical books it would have been a very easy matter to get together a complete register of names, such as would have been in full accord with the object in view to satisfy the Jew. Man indeed would have done that if he had to write the genealogy, but Matthew did not write according to his own taste or wish; the Holy Spirit wrote every word, and He has found it good to make a number of omissions. For this reason, that which is so often claimed to prove that there are contradictions in the Bible, and that the Bible is not infallible, is really a witness for the divinity of the Scriptures. In all this arrangement, leaving out and changing, the Holy Spirit has a wise purpose, and it does not follow, if we in our shortsightedness do not understand it all, that there must be an error involved somewhere. He has the right to do it, and it has been His pleasure to leave out generations. This is also so in the case of another Old Testament genealogy (see Ezra vii).

The most prominent omission is in verse eight. Three kings are left out. These are Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah. Who were they? They are the descendants of the daughter of wicked Ahab, Athaliah. Athaliah desired to annihilate

the kingly seed of the house of Judah. This was a satanic attempt to frustrate the purposes of God. It was, like Haman's attempt, inspired by him who is a murderer from the beginning. It may be called Anti-Messianity. This is undoubtedly the reason why the Holy Spirit left out these three kings.

Another apparent difficulty is the one concerning Jechoniah (verse 11), Zorobabel and Salathiel. The last two are in the genealogy in Luke, and Zorobabel being called a son of Salathiel when 1 Chr. iii:19 speaks of him as a son of Pedaiah.

We give a few hints, which will be helpful in the correct understanding. Jehoiakim is often called by the name of his son Jechoniah. Both have the same meaning translated from the Hebrew, Jehovah will establish. Jehoiakim was carried away into Babylon (2 Kings xxiv:15). He has had brethren, which Jechoniah had not (1 Chr. iii:15). Thus it becomes clear that Jechoniah is Jehoiakim. In the twelfth verse we have Jechoniah, the son of Jehoiakim, because Salathiel is the son of Jechoniah (1 Chr. iii:17). Read also Jeremiah xxii:30.

Upon the line of Solomon there was then a curse, and Joseph is in connection with that line. Upon the line of Nathan there was no curse, and thus in His birth from Mary He is in truth the Son of David, still in the eyes of the nation He was it legally in Joseph.

If Zorobabel and Salathiel appear in Luke we may take them as different persons. The difficulty of Zorobabel being

the son of Salathiel here and the son of Pedaiah in Chronicles may be solved by the levirate law.

Other striking facts come to our knowledge when we go through the list of the generations, each one is highly significant. We mention a few only. Judah is mentioned, because the prophecy of Jacob makes it clear that from him the Shiloh would come (Gen. xlix:10). We are reminded of something else in the phrase, Judah and his brethren, namely, of Judah's sin and his brethren's in selling their own brother, and all that is connected with it.

David alone has the title, the king (verse 6). Solomon's name is there, but there is no kingship attached to it. The unbelieving Jew, as he tries to reject prophecies concerning the Messiah, has always made a strong point of this, that the promises given to David concerning a son were all fulfilled in Solomon. Solomon according to them is the king, and higher than David in his rule and dominion. How striking then that the Holy Spirit gives the name simply Solomon without adding, the king, to it. David is the king and no other can have the title, till his son come: even He who came and whom David called Lord (Ps. cx:1). Thus the angel announced Him, the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

In the last fourteen generations beginning with Zorobabel, we find no more prominent names. Only two of them are recorded in the Old Testament. Zorobabel means, Born in Babel, and his son Abiud, which means, Perishing. However,

the most interesting fact is the four women who are mentioned in the genealogy. Three of them are found in the first division and the fourth in the second one. Women in a genealogy is something which is very rarely the case. There were many noble, devoted and believing women in the Old Testament. Sarah, Rebekah, Deborah, and women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured not accepting deliverance (Heb. xi:35). One would naturally expect that in the genealogy of Him who is the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head, some of these women who believed the promise would be mentioned. However, we look in vain for them. Instead of them we discover four, who are only known, at least three, by their shame, and the other belonged to a race which was according to the law cursed. Let us look into the names and history of these four women.

Tamar is the first. Her shameful history of fornication is recorded in Genesis xxxviii. What a dark story it is, full of the evil deeds of the flesh. Sin in its blackness is seen there. But how did she get into the genealogy? The answer is, by her sin. It was her shameful sin that puts her here in the genealogy of Him who has come to save that which is lost, the Saviour of men. The Holy Spirit has put her name in and shows by it that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners. He has come to save the vilest and the lowest. And the second one is *Rahab*. Who was she? A Canaanitess. Unclean and outcast, a harlot full of abomination. Yet here is her name too linked with Salmon (meaning clothed) and Boaz, her son, which means, "In

strength." She had believed the messengers as they had come, and the scarlet thread, the sign of her deliverance from the doomed city, was in her window. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb. xi:31). It was faith by which she came into line. Every Jew knew her history and knew too that she had come in to share Israel's blessings. Still the proud Pharisees murmured when Jesus sat down and ate and drank with the publicans and the sinners and the outcasts gathered around Him, murmuring because He sought the lowest.

Ruth, the third woman mentioned, is an exception, for there is no stain upon her character. She was a Moabitess. The law was against her and cursed her. It is written, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever" (Deut. xxiii : 3). But in faith too she enters into the congregation with her children, and the third after her, her grandson, is King David himself. The law which had pronounced the curse is completely set aside in her case.

The fourth woman is not mentioned by name—Her of Uriah, that is all it says. We know it is Bath-Sheba, the one with whom King David committed adultery. Here it is sin in connection with a believer. Did that sin committed by King David then undo him as a believer? No, he had believed and grace had full sway over him.

What a wonderful demonstration of the whole and full Gospel of Grace as it is in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ! We

see sin—Faith as it lays hold and salvation by faith—deliverance from the law—and then the case of the believer, the assurance of salvation. Grace—nothing but grace shines out as nowhere else in the genealogy, in the four women, all four Gentiles. Hannah broke out in her prophetic song and said, "He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. ii:8). How truly this is seen with Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bath-Sheba. What comfort in this fact for us all!

He is Son of Abraham. Through Him the blessing is to go out to the greatest sinner, to the deepest in misery and in want, blessing to the Gentiles in the new dispensation of grace.

We come now to the account of His birth. Here He is presented as human and divine, born of a virgin and at the same time Jehovah-Saviour, Emmanuel, God with us. If Matthew i:1-17 were all that could be said of His birth, He might then *have had* a legal right to the throne, but He could never have been He who was to redeem and save from sin. But the second half before us shows Him to be truly the long promised One, the One of whom Moses and the prophets spake, to whom all the past manifestations of God in the earth and the types, pointed. To accomplish the work of salvation, to suffer the penalty of sin and to put away sin He had to be divine and human.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was thus: His mother, Mary, that is having been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy

Ghost. But Joseph, her husband, being righteous, and unwilling to expose her publicly, purposed to have her put away secretly; but while he pondered on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

"Now all this came to pass that that might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. But Joseph having awoke from his sleep did as the angel of the Lord enjoined him, and took to him his wife, and knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn Son; and he called His name Jesus (verses 18-25)."

How simple all this sounds; yet here are depths which no human mind can or ever will fathom. All attempts to explain will utterly fail. Faith worships here and looks with profound adoration upon the mystery made known, God manifested in the flesh. The Lord stood before Abraham, clothed in the form of a human being, eating and drinking (Genesis xviii). What humiliation that was for Him even then, but how much deeper and far-reaching it is here? It is now His mother, Mary, which is prominent in the record. Born of a woman Paul says in Galatians iv. This directs our attention to the very first promise made in Genesis iii: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman,

and between thy seed and her seed: *He* shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel." This is the first promise of a Deliverer.

We often read in the prophetic Word, I am *He*. The Hebrews have the word "Hu" (He) as a divine name. In the ancient book of *Zohar* the word "He" is applied to the eternal God bruising the serpent's head. He is to be the seed of the woman, not of Adam, the man. Interesting is the following quotation from an ancient exposition of the Jews. "The voice which our first parents heard walking in the garden was the Word of the Lord, or the Messiah. Before they sinned they saw the glory of the blessed God speaking with them, but after their sin they heard only the voice walking. The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and they shall obtain healing in the days of the Messiah."

Mary was that elect woman, a virgin, from whom the One seed came. She was betrothed to Joseph, the Son of David, and so that there should not even be the shadow of a doubt, it is added, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost. Righteous Joseph pondering on these things and as a righteous man undoubtedly praying to God about it, is visited by an angel of the Lord. Even the little word *"an"* is here of importance. We hear much in the Old Testament of *the* angel of the Lord. He appears often as the mediator between God and man. He has divine names and attributes. He appeared in the form of man to Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, the children of Israel, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, and to Man-

oah's wife. Jacob calls him the angel, the Redeemer. In Isaiah lxiii:9 he is called the angel of His face. Indeed all through the Old Testament Jehovah and His glory is in him revealed, so that in these manifestations we see the incarnation foretold. The very name of God was in him (Exodus xxiii:20). The old Jewish synagogue believed correctly that this angel of the Lord is the word of God, the Messiah. The One who appeared as the angel, is now to be born of the virgin. He emptied Himself, taking a servant's form, taking His place in the likeness of men (Phil. ii:7). If the writing of the Gospel of Matthew had been the work of an impostor, he would surely have written, that the angel of the Lord came to Joseph, instead of an angel. So even the little word, an, brings out the verbal inspiration.

In the Gospel of Luke we read that the angel Gabriel (the same who announced to Daniel the coming of the Messiah and the time of the end), was sent of God to Mary, and came in to her and said, "Hail, favored one! the Lord is with thee. But she, seeing the angel, was troubled at his word, and reasoned in her mind what this salutation might be. And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in the womb to bear a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for the ages, and of His kingdom there shall not be an end. But Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I know not

a man? And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God" (Luke i:28-35). In reading this one almost hears the voice which spoke to Moses, Take off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Both Gospels bring it out clearly that it is the Son of God, the eternal Word, who becomes a man, truly the child of His virgin mother, flesh and blood, a real human body like ours, but a *holy* thing, that is *absolutely* without sin. His human nature proceeded directly from the Spirit of God. No other being could have saved us.

The Old Testament speaks often of this great event, the birth of the Saviour, and that He is to be divine and human in His person. He is called the Branch (Zemach). In Isaiah He is called, The branch of Jehovah, and in other prophets, The branch of David. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah ix:7). There is a very important and remarkable passage in Jeremiah, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall encompass a man" (Jer. xxxi:22). This belongs to a Messianic prophecy as shown by the context. It is a new thing which is to take place, and a creation. This could never be said of the birth of a child in the natural way. Even one of the ancient rabbis acknowledges that Jer. xxxi:22 speaks of Messiah,

and that by the woman a virgin is meant. In the Jewish writings, some of them of great antiquity, much is said on the origin and birth of the Christ. We quote but a few of the most important words of the rabbis. "Several state that Messiah is to have no earthly father." "The birth of the Messiah alone shall be without any defects." "His birth shall not be like that of other men." "The birth of the Messiah shall be like the dew of the Lord, as drops upon the grass without the action of man."

That this exposition of the Scriptures concerning the miraculous birth of the Messiah was generally believed at the time of our Lord is seen from the Gospel of John. "Is not this He whom they seek to kill? and behold He speaks openly and they say nothing to Him. Have the rulers then indeed recognized that this is the Christ? But as to this man we know whence He is. Now, as to the Christ, when He comes *no one knows whence He is* (John vii:27). With this they acknowledged that they believed that with the birth of the Christ a mystery is connected. They thought then they knew who Jesus of Nazareth is; "And they said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we have known? How then does he say I am come down from heaven?" (John vi:24). Many centuries later wicked Jews wrote a vulgar and blasphemous account of the birth of our Lord, but the early Jews, it seems never attempted to contradict the first chapter in Matthew.

The angel bade Joseph not to fear, and make known to him not only that that which is begotten in Mary is of the Holy Ghost, but he said also, "She shall bring forth a son,

and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

The word Jesus is taken from the Hebrew Jehoshua, which means, Jehovah is the Saviour. It is the precious name in which the whole story of salvation is contained. The people of Jehovah are His people, because He is Jehovah, and left His eternal glory, His riches, and became poor, to save them from their sins. When Moses stood in the presence of this descended Lord, who proclaimed before him the name of the Lord, Moses said, "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord," saying this looking to heaven, "let my Lord," the One who had come down and stood before him, "I pray thee go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquities and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." (Exodus xxxiv:9). And He has come, Jesus, who is able to save His people from their sins, because He is God, and gracious, as revealed to Moses in the mountain. They rejected Him and His salvation. They are scattered among the nations, blinded and hardened, but He is neverthless Jesus who shall save His people. He has bought the field and the treasure in it. He will come again and turn away ungodliness from Jacob and remember their sins no more. Yes, He will come again and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever. Saul of Tarsus heard the voice from heaven, which said, "I am Jesus!" It is very significant that He spoke thus to the one who became the apostle to the Gentiles, and who in many respects is a type of the whole nation in unbelief and in their com-

ing conversion. He saved Saul of Tarsus. He will save all Israel yet. For believers, His name is not simply Jesus, but for us, the church, He is both Saviour and Lord, and the right way to address Him is by His full name, as it is by the resurrection from among the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the declaration that He shall save His people from their sins the message of the angel was completed. It is now Matthew, and through Matthew of course the Holy Spirit, who continues. The most vital passage of the Old Testament is brought to the front. This is the familiar prophecy in Isaiah vii:14, which reads, "Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel." Like most all the other Messianic prophecies, this one has also been the target of "Higher Criticism." These learned (?) critics have made some very ridiculous utterances on this sublime prophecy, and said that it is anything but Messianic. They stand not alone, but are in company with rationalistic Jews and other infidels, who serve the power of darkness—the one who is the falsifier of God's Word from the beginning. Some of this infidel trash of Wellshausen, etc., is continually being rehashed by some of the so-called professors in theological "evangelical" seminaries in this country. Alas! how true still, professing themselves wise, they became *fools*. Higher criticism is nothing else but infidelity and foolishness.

It is with these critics, who are the educators of the coming preachers in the different denominations, a question what Isaiah wrote and what he did not write, what is genuine

and what is added to by another hand. So it is being taught that Isaiah spoke of his own wife when he uttered the words which are before us. Now beware how you treat this prophecy! Matthew 1:22 says that not the prophet said these words, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child," but the Lord Himself spoke these words through the prophet. A denial of Isaiah vii:14 that it is not a Messianic prophecy is a denial of the integrity of the New Testament, a denial of the Lord. How does any one dare to say the prophet did not utter a prophecy at all, that it is not to be understood as meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, when the Holy Spirit in the very first chapter in the New Testament declares that it is a Messianic prophecy, and that it has found its fulfillment in the person of our Lord? If there were no other evidence whatever in the Old Testament, nay, if there were many difficulties connected with it Matthew 1:22 would settle it all and would be sufficient proof in itself for what the Lord meant when He spoke these words through Isaiah the prophet.

But there is nothing whatever in Isaiah vii. which would in any way show that the prophecy is not Messianic. The Lord spoke the promise at a time when the house of David was discouraged and disheartened, and King Ahaz, instead of trusting the Lord, continued in unbelief. The prophet asks him to demand a sign from the Lord, but he rejects the offer under the plea that he would not tempt God. Upon this the prophet said that the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, and the prophecy then spoken is the sign for the discouraged king and the house of David. In other words, Messiah

is to be born, He is to come from Judah, and from the house of David. How could he, the king, fear destruction and extermination? This was the comfort of the sign. The birth of Him is a sign—something extraordinary, a miracle, and therefore the promise of comfort begins with the prophetic word, "Behold." We will not enter into fuller discussion of the seventh chapter of Isaiah, nor answer the arguments which are brought against the Hebrew word used here for virgin; all this would be of little value and profit to most of our readers.* Some have seen a difficulty that the child was to be named Emmanuel, and instead of this name, He is named Jesus. The Jew often comes with this question. We point out to him that this apparent contradiction is really a proof of the inspiration. How easy it would have been for Matthew to have all fit in so that every word would be in

*"That the word *almoh,* in Isaiah denotes an *untouched virgin,* sufficiently appears from the sense of the passage Isa. vii:14. King Ahaz was afraid lest the enemies that were now upon him might destroy Jerusalem and utterly consume the house of David. The Lord meets this fear by a sign and most remarkable promise, namely, 'that sooner should a pure virgin bring forth a child than the family of David perish.' And the promise yields a double comfort: namely, of Christ hereafter to be born of a virgin; and of their security from the imminent danger of the city and house of David. So that, although that prophecy, of a virgin's bringing forth a son, should not be fulfilled till many hundreds of years after, yet, at that present time, when the prophecy was made, Ahaz had a certain and notable sign, that the house of David should be safe and secure from the danger that hung over it. As much as if the prophet had said: 'Be not so troubled O Ahaz, does it not seem an impossible thing to thee, that never will happen, that a pure virgin become a mother? But I tell thee such a virgin shall bring forth a son, before the house of David perish.'"—*Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae by Lightfoot.*

harmony with the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit guided his hand in writing. The prophecy in the Old Testament says, "And call His name Immanuel." Here it says, "They shall call his name." In the first chapter of Matthew we read that Joseph called the child's name Jesus, but in Luke we read that Mary calls His name Jesus. The name Emmanuel, God with us, is only given in Matthew. He is Emmanuel, and as such Jehovah the Saviour, so that in reality both names have the same meaning. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with his Father) full of grace and truth" (John i:14). He is the exalted One over all.

Joseph was obedient to the word of the Lord as it had come to him through the angel. That Mary had other children is clearly seen from the sixty-ninth Psalm, verses 7 and 8, where it speaks of His suffering: "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I am become a stranger to my brethren, even an alien to the children of my mother."

CHAPTER II.

The second chapter in Matthew relates events which are nowhere else recorded in the Gospels. For this reason, and this is the only reason, the authenticity of the chapter has been doubted more than once. All that which the second chapter contains belongs properly into the Jewish, dispensational Gospel, and would indeed be entirely out of place in the other three Gospels, therefore the Holy Spirit has seen fit to put it only in the first Gospel. The chapter contains the story of the coming of the Magi or wise men to Jerusalem in search of the King of the Jews, to worship Him, and to bring Him the gifts they had brought from afar; the wrath of Herod the king, and the flight of the child into Egypt, the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem, the return from Egypt, and the dwelling of the Lord in Nazareth as the rejected One. All these events are foretold in the Old Testament, to which we are referred and where we learn the meaning of them. The chapter is an intensely interesting one, full of important teachings. It gives us in a nutshell the story of the entire Gospel. The true King is not known in Jerusalem, the City of a great King; in His own royal residence, His people do not know He has come. Strangers from distant lands seek Him and are desirous to know and to worship Him. Still worse, the ecclesiastical authorities, the chief priests and the scribes,

are indifferent, and the civil ruler is filled with hatred against Him and seeks His life, and later both combined to kill Him. Thus in one of the shortest chapters and narratives the trend of the whole Gospel is given. But it is reaching still farther. The whole history of the kingdom of the heavens in its hidden form is here outlined, and the character of the entire new dispensation is manifested.

"Now Jesus having been born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that hath been born, King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him?" (verses 1, 2.)

The first question would be to ascertain the time when these wise men came to Jerusalem. It is generally believed that it was immediately after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. The old masters have taken most of the subjects for their paintings from biblical history, but many of these productions, if not all, are unscriptural and misleading. Thus the birth of the Saviour has been put on canvas, so familiar to our readers, a stable, a manger, Mary and Joseph, domestic animals, a star shining over the building, shepherds with their staffs on the one hand and on the other three gaudily attired persons on their knees, glittering crowns on their heads, and in the extended hands the gift upon which the eyes of the babe rest. Such a picture of course is incorrect. The authorized version, too, has helped such a wrong conception along by having it translated, "But when Jesus was born." The correct reading is, But Jesus having been born, that is some time after and *not immediately* after.

Other evidences in the chapter show that the child must have been about a year old when the visit of the wise men occurred. They had seen His star, announcing to them in their far away homes that the expected king had been born. They had to travel over a large territory, and the journey must have taken many months, and then there is nothing to show that they started at once. In the eleventh verse we read, "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him." In Luke it says, "And she brought forth her first born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." In Matthew it is a house where the child is found, in Luke there was no room in the inn. Perhaps the most important evidence is in the sixteenth verse. Herod had privately called the wise men and inquired of them exactly the time that the star appeared. Their answer is not given, but from the sixteenth verse we may conclude that Herod had received a very definite answer by which he knew that the child could not be over two years old.

The second question would be about these strange visitors, who came to do homage before the King. Who were they? How many of them came? They are called in the Greek, Magi from the East. Magi is the name by which in olden times a large class of people, who were occupied with occult things, were known. These were the astrologers, interpreters of dreams and omens, medical men, necromancers, etc. Among the Persians and Medes they formed a special

class of priests, and were chiefly occupied with foretelling events from the stars, and preparations of medicines for bodily ills. From Magi has come the more modern word magic; in an evil sense, sorcerer. Daniel was chief over such a class of wise men. "And the king made Daniel to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel ii:48). These wise men of the East were not all impostors. Many of them were earnest seekers after the truth, and students of natural forces. They did not have the true light. What a significant fact it is that now in the beginning of the twentieth century, in the midst of so-called Christian nations, soothsayers, readers of "human destiny" through the stars, those who claim to ask the dead, others having familiar spirits, are practicing their deceptions, wickedness and abominations, and are advertising their evil things openly, and find among these so-called "Christians" thousands and thousands to consult them. It cannot be otherwise. The true Light rejected, the truth not believed, strong delusions and utter darkness follow (2 Thess. ii). The Magi here were unquestionably earnest seekers after truth. There is nothing to show how many came thus to Jerusalem. That three came and that these three were kings is incorrect. We would rather think that a larger number made their appearance in the city, followed perhaps by a large train of attendants. Their appearance in number was striking enough to startle Jerusalem, and to bring trouble into the heart of its wicked king.

They had seen "His star," the star of the born King of the Jews. There has been much speculating about the star,

likewise. Many think that the star was a constellation of Jupiter and Saturn. The great astronomer, Kepler, issued in 1606 a book in which he attempted to show the year of the birth of our Lord by such a constellation. In 1463 the great Jewish teacher, Abarbanel, concluded from a similar constellation which happened then that the coming of the Messiah must be near. But it does not say stars, but it is star, and that His star. It is also incorrect to think that the star guided the Magi from the East across an immense stretch of country and brought them at last to Jerusalem. The star they had seen in the East went before them only after they had departed from Jerusalem. It says then, "When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." This shows that for a time they did not see the star. Perhaps in their ancient traditions there was something left of Balaam's prophecy (Numbers xxiii and xxiv). Might they not have had fragments of Daniel's prophecies? It is a well known fact that throughout the East there was at that time a universal expectancy of the coming of a King, and Jerusalem was connected with this King. A similar expectancy is even now noticeable among Oriental nations. A marvelous light was seen by these men. It burst forth in a brilliant brightness, as once more in the near future the heavens will be lit up by the sign of the Son of man, returning in power and glory. With that strange light in the heavens, a brilliant star, the intelligence was conveyed to them that the King, the One who is the desire of all nations (Hag. ii:3) was born. And that light was sufficient for these seekers to make them set out with their gifts, to undertake

the long and dangerous journey to find the King and bow before His royal person.

What a day it was when they arrived at last in Jerusalem, not guided there by the star, but by the knowledge that in Jerusalem the King was to reign, and where they expected to find Him! But what did they find? Jerusalem under the regime of an Edomite. Herod upon the throne and his heart filled with Edomite hatred. No question that these evil rulers, including this one, are types of the final usurper, the Antichrist, whom the Lord will find in possession of the city when He comes the second time, and whom He will destroy with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. "Where is He that hath been born King of the Jews?" Where is He? In vain they go after their long journey through the streets of Jerusalem asking the question; there is no answer. The great city with its magnificent religious institutions, its wonderful Herodian temple, then still in process of erection, its aristocratic priesthood and benevolent institutions, had no knowledge of that King; nay, they did not desire that King to come, they were self-satisfied. This foreshadows the whole story of the rejection of the King, the Lord from heaven, that there was not alone no room for Him in the inn, but there was likewise no room for Him among His own; they received Him not. Herod, the king, was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. He feared for his throne, which was not his. Jerusalem knew what Herod's fear meant—rebellion, bloodshed, and suffering.

How true this is still, and how truly it describes the en-

tire dispensation in which we live! Jerusalem knows not the King, has rejected Him who is their Messiah, and ever since, Jerusalem and Israel's sad history of blood and tears has begun and will surely not end till the false king is dethroned and Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is crowned as Lord of all.

And these men from the East were not Jews, they were not Israelites, but *Gentiles*. For months, while Jerusalem is not acquainted with the fact of the birth of the long promised One, they had knowledge that He had come. Gentiles were first to acknowledge and to worship Him. The first became last and the last became first. By their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy. He, the Saviour, is first, a light for the "unveiling of the Gentiles, but in the end, too, the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke ii:32). Still it is to be seen here likewise that not all the Gentiles came to worship Him, only a small number, and so throughout this dispensation the promise is not that the nations will walk in His light and worship Him, but only a people is called out from the nations for His name. We will see later in the exposition of this chapter that these Gentiles who came to Jerusalem are typical of all the nations going up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts.

But in Jerusalem there was not only a king who was the enemy of the right heir to David's throne, but there were the religious leaders of the people, the Pharisees, the scribes, the priests and the chief priests. The learned doctors of the law, the students of prophecy, the orthodox; had they no

knowledge of Him of whom Moses and the Prophets spoke? Surely if they hear He has come they will run to meet Him and welcome Him! Far from it; they were ignorant, likewise, and all indifferent to the startling news which had come to Jerusalem from such an extraordinary source.

"And when Herod the king heard it he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and having gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for it is written through the prophet, And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art in no wise least among the governors of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth a leader who shall be a shepherd to my people Israel."

By order of the king they were called together, not in a special session of the Sanhedrim, but in a larger gathering, all the chief priests and scribes are commanded to show themselves and to produce the scrolls of the law, the prophets and the writings. And now Herod puts his question, Where is Messiah to be born? The answer comes at once from the prophecies of Micah in the beginning of the fifth chapter, "Bethlehem in Juda." There was no dissenting voice. They were all orthodox and had a perfect knowledge of the scriptures, but it was head knowledge, and their consciences were not touched by it. The quotation itself differs from the original Hebrew and from the Septuagint. They used undoubtedly the text from a Chaldee paraphrase. The meeting is dismissed and all goes on in its usual way. Nothing is said that these priests and scribes were awakened and

joined the seeking strangers to find Him, who is their Messiah. Sad was their state. Knowledge sufficient, but no interest in Him, no love for Him, the living Word. Their hearts were not filled with joy, and perhaps in their indifference the incident was soon forgotten, till one day the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem reminded them once more of what had happened. It is the first time we meet these chief priests and scribes in the Gospel; they will soon stand before us in all their religiousness in another character. Indifferent they were once, and soon we shall see them in their hatred, wickedness, and at last, with a perfect knowledge of the person who is in their midst, they deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And is this not true in Christendom at this present time? How much there is of religiousness, rituals, ceremonies and creeds of men, but with all this it is nothing but profession outwardly, the heart cares not for Him and has no interest in Him. The indifference of our times in the midst of Christendom is appalling. There is no interest in the coming again of our Lord as there was no interest in the religious leaders of the people at His first coming. Indifference ends with this age also in opposition and apostasy, followed by judgment. Perhaps for the first time had these wise men from the East heard the Word of God. The flash of light, the brilliant star, that supernatural sign, was sufficient to start them on their way. The light they had they followed, and soon there is added to it. The Word of God they heard perhaps not at all from any of the scribes and chief priests. These strangers were despised by them and considered as

dogs, in spite of the prophetic scriptures which speak of the salvation of the Gentiles. The presence of them in Jerusalem should have taught them the fulfillment of prophecy. No, not the scribes and chief priests acquaint the wise men with the Word, but wicked King Herod, with his wicked thoughts and intentions, transmits it to them. "Then Herod, having privately called the Magi, inquired of them exactly the time that the star appeared; and sending them to Bethlehem he said, Go and search out exactly about the child and when ye have found Him bring me back word, that I may come and worship Him also." They are obedient to the word spoken; though it came from Herod's lips, it was nevertheless the truth. Jerusalem is left behind, and their faces are set towards Bethlehem. "When they had heard the king they departed; and lo, the star they had seen in the East went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

The question has been raised, Where did they find the child? In Luke we read, "And when they had performed all these things according to the law of the Lord, they returned unto Galilee, their own city Nazareth" (Luke ii:39). Now if the wise men came about a year later, did they find the child in Bethlehem or were they guided all the way up to Nazareth? We think they were guided by the star to Bethlehem in fulfillment of the word they had heard. Bethlehem is in a southern direction from Jerusalem and Nazareth directly north. They were put without question on the right road by Herod, when the star appeared again.

But if the parents were in Bethlehem a year later with the child, why did they go there? The Gospel of Luke gives the answer. "Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast" (Luke ii:41, 42). This brings out that they were a year after again in Jerusalem for the feast, and were therefore not in Nazareth. Bethlehem was truly their city, and the very short journey was made there from Jerusalem, where the wise men now found the young child with Mary His mother.

"And having come into the house they saw the little child with Mary, his mother, and falling down did Him homage. And having opened their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh." With exceeding great joy they had welcomed the reappearing of the star; it came and stood over the place where the child was. They enter into the house and find the little child and Mary, his mother. Even the order of words teaches us something. It is not Mary, his mother, and the little child, but the one who is God manifested in the flesh stands first, and Joseph is not at all mentioned. What a rebuke to the corrupt systems in Christendom where Mary and Joseph occupy a prominent place and are worshipped. The wise men worshipped Him, there was no adoration for Mary, while Joseph was completely ignored. All the worship and bowing of knee is for Him of whom it is written that at His name every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God

the Father's glory (Phil. ii:10). The outcome of their long and tedious journey, of their searching and seeking Him who is the King, was worship. A little light was followed, and soon the increase came. The Word of God showed them the way, and there was a second outburst of light from the star which brought them to the right place. What else could they do then but do homage to Him and to adore Him? Their first business was worship. It should be so with every true believer. We often hear it said, "saved to serve." This is not strictly true. We are saved by grace to worship and adore our God and Father and His Son, our Saviour and Lord. Service comes in, too, but only after worship. Where grace is rightly understood there will be a great deal of worship and praise, followed by true service, but where there is a dim conception of what God has done for us, what He has made us in His Son, and where that blessed and comforting doctrine, the assurance of salvation, is not known, there will be much service or attempted service, with much unrest, but little worship, or none at all. May our readers understand that worship stands first and is the first thing. The Father seeks worshippers (John iv:23). We are saved by grace to be worshippers of Him. All our joy and peace as believers, as well as fruitbearing, comes from being at His feet and doing homage to Him.

How long the worship of the wise men lasted we do not know, nor how long they tarried. After their worship they opened their treasures and offered to Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. This was their service, the offering of gifts.

Prophetically, this homage of the wise men, and the gifts they brought, is of much importance. It was, of course, and still is a custom of the Orient to appear before a person of royal descent with many presents, but here we have more than a simple custom. Without knowing it, nor knowing the significance of what they did, their hands, in selecting the gifts, were divinely guided. As King they had sought Him, as such they worshipped Him, and now the presents are in full harmony with the character of the King. The gold speaks of His divine and kingly glory, the frankincense of the fragrance of His life, as Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, and myrrh, the balsamic juice of Arabian myrtle, which is used for burial, speaks of His death, that this King is to lay down His life. What lessons there come even from the gifts the wise men spread before our Lord.

Quite often we are told that this is in fulfillment of Isaiah lx:6. However, in looking at this passage, we discover that the wise men could not be spoken of there, nor that they fulfilled that prophecy. We read in Isaiah: "They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord." We notice at once that Isaiah does not say anything at all about myrrh. Why, then, is there no myrrh in Isaiah, and why is there a mention made of myrrh by Matthew? The passage in Isaiah refers to the coming of the Gentiles at the time when the rejected King has come again in power and in glory, and is King of kings; hence there is no need of myrrh. The whole scope of Isaiah lx brings this out. "For behold, darkness

shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the nations (yet to come during the tribulation), but the Lord shall arise upon thee (Israel) and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." If we read through this chapter we find multitudes coming, and they seek not a small humble house like the wise men did, but they seek the house of glory, and there they meet the King of Glory in His beauty, and spread before Him gold and frankincense, shouting aloud His praises and the glory of His name. What a glorious chapter this is, and, oh, the joy which fills us as believers in the anticipation when all this shall be so. May it soon be when violence shall no more be heard in the land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders; but thy walls shall be called salvation and thy gates praise. We would say, then, that it is incorrect to state that the wise men came in fulfillment of Isaiah lx:6; they were but faint types of what shall take place after the Glory, when no more bloodthirsty Herod will be upon the throne, and Jerusalem and not Bethlehem will be the city to which the Gentiles journey, the city of a great King.

"And being divinely instructed in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." This is all the Word has to say about the departure of these strangers. After their worship and offering of gifts, divine guidance instructs them. It is guidance, likewise, we have as believers, but it is a guidance through the Spirit in the Word.

"Now they having departed, behold an angel of the Lord

appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying, Arise, take to thee the little child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee; for Herod will seek the little child to destroy it. And having arisen, he took to him the little child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and he was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord, through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (verses 13-15).

Thus the narrative continues. The child is the only prominent figure in it. There is a spurious gospel, called the Gospel of the Infancy of our Lord,* in which the flight to Egypt is adorned with many miracles. We mention some of them. Idols broke to pieces wherever the child came; the three-year-old child of an Egyptian priest who was possessed by demons put a swaddling cloth of the child upon his head, and the demon fled; a woman possessed by a demon was healed by looking upon Mary; robbers fled in terror before the child; all manner of diseases were healed, including leprosy, etc. The whole book shows that it is a counterfeit, gotten up by some one who favored the worship of Mary and the child. How simple the story is here in Matthew. The child is dependent upon Joseph, who is now mentioned, and in poverty, under great danger, at night, they had to flee. God could have transported His Son by a miracle, but the Son of God had become man, and now it was for Him to enter into all. He has to go the long and weary road. The cause of the flight was Herod, who under

*Evangelium Infantiæ.

the power of Satan sought the life of the child. He shows himself here as the murderer from the beginning. Satan is that still, the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, ready to devour the man-child (Rev. xii). The place of refuge is Egypt. There He is to go, to be called back after a while in fulfillment of the prophetic Word, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

This prophecy is found in Hosea xi:1. "When Israel was a child then I loved Him, and called My Son out of Egypt." This was spoken about 700 years before and is about Israel, but here we learn through the Holy Spirit its true and full meaning. Jews, infidels and higher critics have stumbled at this, but how simple even this is, no difficulty, as commentaries sometimes say. Israel is, according to Exodus iv:22, God's first born Son, and in Jeremiah xxxi:9 we read, "I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first born." Christ and Israel are closely identified in the prophetic Word. Thus the Messiah, our Lord, is called in Isaiah the servant of the Lord, and Israel is spoken of there, too, as the servant of the Lord, that is Israel's Messiah is the servant of the Lord through whose obedient suffering and death Israel becomes at last in the earth the righteous servant of Jehovah. Israel is God's first born, but the Lord Jesus Christ is not alone the only begotten of the Father, but also the first born from the dead. In resurrection He will be the first born among many brethren, which is the Church, His body. But through Him and in Him alone, Israel, God's earthly people, His first born will become that for which God has called them according to His merciful purposes. Israel's history beginning

with Egypt, has been a history of sin, disobedience, apostasy and shame. Therefore the true One had to come, the true servant of the Lord in obedience—obedience unto death. He had to go through the history of His people. This is the reason why He had to go down to Egypt, the house of bondage. Of course, there was no bondage for Him. And when He is called out of Egypt, He comes to pass through the wilderness to be tested and tried, going the long journey through all in the spirit of holiness without sin, far different from that which Israel was. How blessedly He became identified with all.

In the following three verses we read of the satanic rage of Herod when he finds that the wise men did not return and all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its borders from two years and under were slain. "Then it was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying: A voice has been heard in Rama, weeping and great lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." The wicked deed is but a beginning of the sorrows of Israel on account of the rejection of the King. His blood indeed has been upon them and their children, the worst is still to come in the time of Jacob's trouble when the false Messiah will be like Herod, shedding their blood. The quotation is from Jeremiah xxxi:15. It is an application here of that prophecy. Rachel was buried near Bethlehem. Dying there she called the son who was born to her Ben-oni, which means the son of my sorrow, but his father Jacob soon changed his name, and the son of sorrow becomes Benjamin, which means, the

son of the right hand. Rachel is seen here as weeping and lamenting over the slaughtered children, the children of Bethlehem. They were no more, and would not be comforted. What greater crying and lamentation there shall be in the future in the land! In Jeremiah, in the context, we read: "Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears—they shall come again from the land of the enemy." The child had escaped the murderous onslaught of Satan through Herod, but He comes back to lay down His life, that through death He might annul him who has the might of death, that is, the devil; and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage (Hebrews ii.). The return of the child, how long they stayed in Egypt is not said, is next described in our chapter and needs no further comment. The child is kept as He now keeps the feet of His saints, His church, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it.

There is one more prophecy which is to be mentioned. "And having been divinely instructed in a dream, he went away in the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a town called Nazareth; so that it should be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (verses 22, 23). It is next to the questions from the first chapter in Matthew, the most important the inquiring Jew brings in reading the New Testament: "Where is it written, or in what prophet is it written, that Messiah should be called a Nazarene?" It does not say here that it is written by one prophet, but by the prophets. Therefore all the

prophets have spoken of Him as being a Nazarene. A Nazarene is an inhabitant of Nazareth. That city is in Galilee, which is called the Galilee of the Gentiles, because so many Gentiles lived there. The Pharisees and scribes in Jerusalem hated and despised Galilee, and especially was Nazareth despised. The inhabitants were called *Am-horatzim,* that is ignorant men. Even the Galileans looked down upon the town and despised everybody who lived there. The ruin and corruption was there the greatest. Therefore we read in another Gospel: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" To that mean, despised place the Son of God is to go, there He, who was rich in all eternity, found His abode. Now, this is spoken by all the prophets, that the Messiah, the Saviour, was to be rejected by men. The rejection began with the very start, and there in the little town He is to spend thirty years of His life, and when He comes forth and begins His ministry in Galilee, it is only to be rejected again, ending at last in Jerusalem outside of the camp. How true, He was despised and rejected of men. And our place is with Him now in rejection, outside of the camp, to bear His reproach. May this be our place, and like Him, the leader and completer of the faith, may we, for the joy set before us, endure the cross and despise the shame.

CHAPTER III.

The third chapter relates the ministry of the herald of the King, who announces that the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh, and the presence of the King Himself, who is to come after him; the baptism of the King, who comes from Galilee to the Jordan to John, and the events connected with it, are given in the second half of the chapter.

"Now in those days comes John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. For this is He, who has been spoken of through Esaias the prophet saying, A voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. And John himself had his garments of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his nourishment was locusts and wild honey" (verses 1-4).

The forerunner is John the Baptist, a typical Old Testament person, of whom the Lord says later in the Gospel, "Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet, this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say to you, that there is not arisen among the born of women a greater than John the Baptist, but he who is a little one in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he" (chapter xi:9-12). In the same discourse the Lord says, in vindi-

cation of John, who was then in prison: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias who is to come." In the first chapter of Luke the angel announces his birth and says: "For he shall be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine or strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the sons of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn hearts of fathers to children, and disobedient ones to the thoughts of just men, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people" (Luke 1:15-17). In these words, given through the Holy Spirit, the Lord Himself and an angel of the Lord, we have the three prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the forerunner quoted. These are: Isaiah xl:3-5; Malachi iii:1; iv:5, 6. That he was sent in fulfillment of these prophecies is therefore unquestionable. To this comes the manner of his dress and the nourishment. It reminds us of the great prophet Elias, the Tishbite. "He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins" (2 Kings i:8).

John knew His personality and His mission, for he said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John i:23). But when asked, Art thou Elias? he answered, I am not. The Jews expected Elijah, as the orthodox Jews expect him still, as the forerunner of King Messiah. At every passover ceremony a cup is reserved for the prophet Elijah, and at the circumcision of the child a chair is placed for that person, and many are the prayers which are said, that God may send soon the prophet Elijah, for his

presence would indicate to them the nearness of the King. The character and preaching of Elijah were clearly reproduced in John. He was the Elias for his day. If they had received it, he would have been Elias. In this sense, Matthew xvii:12, is to be understood: "Elias cometh and restoreth all things; But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they did not recognize him, but did unto him whatever they would." He was rejected, and his rejection foretold how things would go, that the King Himself would be rejected. We would only mention that before the King comes again there will be once more a forerunner. Once more the message will be heard, The kingdom of the heavens draweth nigh. It will be the Gospel of the Kingdom preached by the remnant during the great tribulation All we have in Malachi iv:5, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," will then be fulfilled. In Revelation xiii one of the two witnesses is, without question, one like Elijah. It is necessary to state, that no great and miracle-working preacher of repentance, in the spirit of Elijah, is promised to Christendom. We make this remark, because in our days persons stand up and declare that they are forerunners, or one of the witnesses or messengers of the covenant. These poor people err and know not the Scripture, and by their conceited claims work untold harm.

John the Baptist appears in the wilderness. He is not in the temple in the midst of the learned and the great. There was no room for him there. He is outside of the camp, and the people too have to leave Jerusalem and go out to him.

This is once more significant. It shows what the end will be.

His preaching is, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh."

The phrase, kingdom of the heavens, is mentioned thirty-two times in the Gospel of Matthew. Here it is for the first time. The strangest meaning has been put upon this term. Christendom at large is all at sea about the meaning of it. Heaven or the church are the general interpretations which are given. Both are wrong, and because the meaning of this term is so grossly misunderstood, there is no conception whatever of the thoughts and purposes of God. The kingdom of the heavens is an Old Testament term. It is to be in the earth and not in heaven. It is a kingdom in which the heavens rule (Daniel iv:26). The setting up of that kingdom is spoken of in Daniel ii:44, and in the seventh chapter, verse 14. It is in the hands of One who is the Son of Man, Messiah, the Son of David, who is to rule in righteousness. In that kingdom there will be universal peace, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. His own people, the house of Judah and the house of Israel, will all be regathered into the land, Jerusalem built again and become the great centre of blessing for the nations of the earth. In one word, the kingdom of the heavens is the *literal* fulfilment of all the prophecies and promises contained in the Old Testament, which the Lord gave to the seed of Abraham, and the blessings of the nations of the earth to come after this kingdom is set up. The Church is not known in the Old Testament, nor is it seen in the opening chapters of

Matthew. *This* kingdom, the forerunner declares, now has drawn nigh, it is at hand. The King is in the earth, Emanuel, He whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and concerning whom it is said, "that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." Not alone did John preach this kingdom to its Jewish, earthly form, but the Lord Himself declared that it had drawn nigh, and when the King sent out His disciples He told them to preach, "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh," the special Messianic kingdom power was put upon them to heal the sick, to raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons (Matthew x).

But as the forerunner and his testimony is rejected, and the King Himself, the coming of that kingdom of the heavens is postponed. It is not set aside completely, but only postponed, and all the glories of that earthly Messianic Kingdom, which will reach from sea to sea, so minutely pictured in Old Testament prophecy, will yet be established in the earth with Jerusalem as the center, for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. The kingdom of the heavens is not the church, and the church is not the kingdom. How great the confusion is on this point in all Christian denominations who read the "history of the church" in the establishment and glory of the kingdom predicted by the prophets.

The proper word for John to utter when appearing in the

wilderness was, *repent.* That kingdom which had now drawn nigh was to bring judgment of all that is evil. Judgments upon all unrighteousness are associated with the coming of that kingdom. Every Jew was acquainted with that fact. It is true the earthly glories of the kingdom of the heavens had been announced by every prophet, but equally true is it that the coming judgments were announced, and at all times in past generations of the earthly people of God, the cry, "Return! Repent!" was heard. Now the greatest one of all the prophets has come, and the cry of the Law and the Prophets, Repent, sounds forth once more, so strong and clear as *never* before.

Before we take up the meaning of repentance here and the baptism unto repentance wherewith he baptized, and compare them with repentance and baptism which are connected with the Gospel of Grace, we must call attention to the quotation from Isaiah which follows. The words are taken from that sublime chapter which begins with, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, the fortieth chapter. In comparing Matthew with Luke we find that the quotation in Luke is complete, in Matthew it is only in part. Luke, or rather the Holy Spirit through him, adds, "Every gorge shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places smooth ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke iii: 5-7)." One would look to the Gospel of Matthew as the Jewish Gospel, to find such a complete quotation from the Old Testament. Why then, is it not all quoted in Matthew, and why does it stand in Luke? The reason is easily found.

Luke's Gospel is for the Gentiles, to show that salvation is to be indeed offered to all flesh. For this reason the full quotation is perfectly in order in that Gospel, while in Matthew, here in the beginning in its narrower scope, it would be out of order. It is likewise to be remarked that the testimony of John was not only the cry in the wilderness, the loud and continued "Repent!" Such is heard here, and when the kingdom hopes are not realized, we shall see him later sending from the prison to the Lord with his question. But John had a more perfect knowledge, which he imparted to his disciples. The proper place for that testimony is neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke, but the Gospel where the Holy Spirit shows us our Saviour and Lord as the only begotten of the Father, the Gospel of John. There John points to Him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. "I have seen and borne Him witness that He is the Son of God (John i:29-34)." But clearer still is that wonderful address he delivers to his disciples when they came to him. "And John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven. Ye, ourselves, bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices in heart because of the voice of the bridegroom; this my joy then is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who has his origin in the earth is of the earth, and speaks as of the earth. He who comes out of heaven is above all, and what He has seen

and what He has heard this He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true; for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things in His hand. He that believes on the Son has life eternal, and he that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him (John iii:27-36)."

Such a testimony then was given by John, he knew of life through Christ and that the bridegroom is the Son of God.

Repentance is his foremost message to the nation. Let us consider briefly what it means. Repentance as it is found in the Old Testament, is God's request to His earthly people to return unto Him. This is the call of John the Baptist in this third chapter. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom which he preaches. The Gospel of Grace is something different. It was not known then, it could not be fully made known and preached till after the death, the resurrection, ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. To preach the Gospel of Grace from the words of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh," would be misleading. Still it is being done throughout Christendom. Not knowing what the kingdom of the heavens is, what the church is, and the differences between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace, there is a constant misapplication of the scriptures and preaching of a repentance which is Jewish. Theological systems, especially Arminianism, have produced a way of salvation, which is surely nothing less, than the new wine in old wineskins. There

is the demand of a repentance, a certain form of penitence, a deep feeling of being lost, grief and despair, turning away from the world and worldly pleasures, seeking the Lord, perhaps for many weary months, then at last, after such a weird experience, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. After this the receiving of what is termed, the witness of the Spirit, a good feeling, by which it is claimed one alone can know that he is saved, a feeling which can be lost, after which the person is once more *unsaved*. That all this is not according to the Gospel of Grace, the teachings of Romans, as well as the other epistles is evident. One who has written on the subject of repentance has done it in such a scriptural and simple way that we desire to quote from his book:*

"What then about repentance? Are faith and the Spirit's work enough? Or is not repentance no less a necessity if men are to be saved? I meet this question boldly and at once by denouncing it as based, not so much on ignorance as on deep seated and systematic error. The repentance which thus obtrudes itself and claims notice in every sermon is not the friend of the Gospel but an enemy. It is like the officious guide, who forces himself upon the traveler only to mislead him. Faith and repentance are not successive stages on the road to life; they are not independent guides to direct the pilgrim's path; they are not separate acts to be successively accomplished by the sinner as a condition of his salvation. But, in different phases of it, they represent the same Godward attitude of the soul, which the truth of God *believed* produces.

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* "The Gospel and its Ministry." By Robert Anderson.

"Salvation there cannot be without repentance any more than without faith, but the *soundest and fullest Gospel preaching need not include any mention of the word.* Neither as verb or noun does it occur in the Epistle to the Romans—God's great doctrinal treatise on redemption and righteousness—save in the warnings of the second chapter. And the Gospel of John, pre-eminently the Gospel-book of the Bible—will be searched in vain for a single mention of it. The beloved disciple wrote his Gospel that men might believe and live, and his Epistle followed to confirm believers in the simplicity and certainty of their faith; but yet from end to end of them the word 'repent' or 'repentance' never once occurs. It is to these writings before all others men have turned in every age to find words of peace and life, and yet some who profess to hold them inspired will cavil at a Gospel sermon because repentance is not mentioned in it—a fault, if fault it be, that marks the testimony of the Apostle John and the preaching of our Lord Himself, as recorded by the fourth evangelist. The repentance of the Gospel is to be found in the Nicodemus discourse and in the gracious testimony to the woman at the well; and, I may add, any repentance that limits or jars upon those sacred words is wholly against the truth."

In Acts iii:19 we hear Peter preaching, "Repent." It is here still to the nation connected with a national hope: The restoring of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets. After the calling out of people for His name is accomplished, and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, there will be once more the call heard, "Repent!"

But the call to repentance is associated with baptism—the baptism unto repentance. "Then went out to Him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country round the Jordan, and were baptized by Him in the Jordan, confessing their sins (verse 5)." Concerning his baptism He said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance." There was then a great stir, and large were the multitudes from the city who came out to hear and to follow the call to repent. Among them were many Pharisees and Sadducees, to whom He said, "Offspring of vipers, who has forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce, therefore, fruit worthy of repentance. And do not think to say within yourselves. We have Abraham for our Father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And already the axe is applied to the root of the trees; every tree therefore not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." "And all the people when they heard it, and the publicans, justified God, having been baptized with John's baptism; but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's counsel with regard to themselves, not being baptized by Him" (Luke vii:29, 30).

The baptism of John shows clearly what repentance means. Jordan is always in the Word the type of death. Thus John baptized in the river of death, which would mean unto death.* The people came, confessed their sins, seeing then their true position, what they were and what they deserved; they went

*Baptism in water was known and practiced among the Jews centuries before John. Proselytes were not only circumcised but also dipped in water.

down into Jordan to be buried in water, thus typifying death. They heard, they believed, they confessed and witnessed to it outwardly. In this way they justified God, as recorded in the above passage from Luke. Christian baptism is, of course, something essentially different. It is not a baptism unto repentance of deserved death, but it is unto Christ's death, who has taken our place and died for us. "Are you ignorant that we, as many as have been baptized unto Christ, have been baptized unto His death? We have been therefore buried with Him by baptism unto death, in order that even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi:3-5). Christian baptism is not taught in the third chapter of Matthew. How much confusion has resulted from giving it such a meaning, placing believers into a sad legalism.

Many then were baptized unto repentance by the forerunner. But now for the first time we meet with the two great religious classes and leaders among the Jews, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who came out to John. These two classes play an important role in the Gospel. The Pharisees* were the strictly religious, orthodox-ritualistic class. They were well versed in the traditions of the elders, and occupied themselves with creating new commandments and strange interpretations of the law. They are the fathers of the talmudical Jews of the present day and typical of

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*The name Pharisee means a Separatist. One who says: "I am holier than thou."

ritualistic Christendom, having the form of godliness and not the power. The Sadducees were the rationalists, the unbelieving class. They were much given to reform. Their offspring to-day are the reformed Jews, who reject the greater part of the Word of God, and in Christendom they are remarkably reproduced in the unevangelical "Isms," though they call themselves "Christian" (as the Sadducees called themselves Jews), who reject portions of the Word, who do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

"Offspring of vipers!" thus the Holy Spirit declared through the forerunner their true character. What a strong and cutting word it is, which applies not alone to the Pharises and Sadducees, but to all ritualistic-religiousness and unbelieving criticism. They are the offspring not of God but of vipers. But still they were the proud boasters of being the seed of Abraham and as such entitled to the promised blessing. They believed that they were to be saved from the wrath of God connected with the establishment of the kingdom, and the wrath would fall entirely upon the Gentile nations. One only needs to peruse some of the tracts of the Talmud to find the reflection of their proud, self-righteous belief. When they came, they were far from taking that true position in repentance, in death. And so John demands of them that they are to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. He uncovers their false pretensions, and shows that no natural birth, no religious attainment would deliver them in the day of wrath. This is followed by the announcement of the nearness of the judgment, the axe laid at the root of the trees, ready to fell the mighty trees void of fruit. All this

finds an application in the day in which we live, when the axe is once more laid at the roots to cut off and cast into the fire that which has not brought fruit.*

From the words of condemnation upon the proud, self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees, the herald of the King now turns to speak, as it became him in humility, of the glorious Person of the King Himself. And what a far-reaching testimony it is we have in the eleventh and twelfth verses! "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire; whose winnowing fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and shall gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable."

Here we have another passage which is of vital importance. Let us understand in the first place that the words spoken refer to the first and second coming of our Lord. Let this be clearly fixed in our minds, and all will be plain. The promise connected with the first coming is, He shall baptize you with the *Holy Spirit.* The second coming of the Lord will bring the baptism with *Fire,* as it is seen at once in the words which follow, which speak clearly of judgment and fire unquenchable. It may appear strange at the first glance that John says in one breath: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"—that the Holy Spirit should

*The conditions in nominal Christendom now, immediately before the Second Coming of Christ, are the same as the conditions in professing Judaism at the time of His first coming.

refer to His first coming and the fire to His second appearing, but let us take into consideration that John still belongs to the Old Testament, and he expresses himself in a way as many of the prophets did, who frequently spoke in one clause of the Lord's first and second coming. However, the fifth verse in the first chapter of Acts puts into our hands the key. The Lord said then to His disciples, "John, indeed, baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." That our Lord speaks of what John said in our passage here is evident, yet He does *not* mention baptism with *fire*. If He had added, and with fire, it would clearly prove that the baptism connected with His first coming is a baptism with the Holy Spirit *and* fire. But He leaves out the fire because it stands in connection with His second coming. Thus it is seen in the entire prophetic Word, which speaks of the day of wrath and vengeance as being a day of burning and fire. How could we even undertake to mention but half of the erroneous doctrines which are more or less emanating from this passage wrongly applied? The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit, etc., has of late years been made very prominent. Conventions for baptisms, fillings with the Holy Spirit, the enduement of the Spirit for power in service, and many other topics in relation to the doctrine of the Spirit and for a so-called "second blessing" (a term which is nowhere found in the Word) are being held. But how sad it is to see the contortions of the Scriptures as well as the unscriptural, abnormal applications which have been made. A good deal comes from teaching that the believer

is to be baptized not alone with the Spirit but also with fire. It is not enough to have believed, so *they* teach, and be saved by Grace, but there is to be a baptism with fire, a second experience which outshines all others. Hence we find the most extravagant terms which are used in connection with the Holy Spirit, such as Holy Ghost preachers and Holy Ghost fire.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit promised by the Lord took place on the day of Pentecost. By this one Spirit are we all baptized into the one body, which is the Church (1 Cor. xii:13). We are not born again by the baptism of the Spirit, but those who are born again become by it the members of that one body. Every believer who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ hath the Holy Spirit. He the blessed Paraclete, is abiding in him. It is wrong for a believer to plead or pray for the Holy Spirit to come unto him, and equally unscriptural is it to pray for a baptism with fire, for there is *no such baptism now,* and no believer could pray for the *flaming fire* to fall upon him, for he is delivered from that wrath.

The Lord comes again, and then it will be with a baptism of fire. The wheat will be gathered into the garner, and then the chaff upon the threshing floor swept together, corresponding with the tares in the parables put together in bundles, will be given over to the fire unquenchable.

John unquestionably waited anxiously for the appearing of Him whose advent he had announced. God, who had sent him to baptize with water, had told him that upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him,

he it is who baptizes with the Spirit (John 1:32-34). At last the moment came. What a moment it was! It terminated the ministry of the forerunner. It was the beginning of the public ministry of the King Himself. He now steps to the front to go that path of obedience marked out for Him, to be presented as King to the nation, to be rejected, and to do that work which no Prophet, no John, no Angel or Archangel could do, but He alone.

"Then comes Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized of him." The Lord, He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire, He who is greater than John, to whom the Baptist bowed in humility and worship, He who is the creator of all things, comes to the preacher of repentance and presents Himself to be baptized. What a scene! John stood amazed. "He forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" In other words, I am the sinner, I need repentance, I deserve to go into that river of death, but Thou art holy—no evil in Thee, nothing worthy of death.

Thus in the very beginning of His public ministry we have the testimony of His holiness. He is the one who alone is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; He knew no sin, who could not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. When at last the prince of this world came he had nothing in Him. But why then should He, the holy one, this spotless, pure being, present Himself to the preacher of repentance? Why should He go into the river of death and take His place in death? Where there is no sin there need be no confession. Where there is no sin there *can*

be no death. How could He, the King, that holy thing born of the virgin, God manifested in the flesh, ever confess sin when there was no sin? Yet He not only came to be baptized, but He was baptized. The question has had many answers. We said above that His baptism marks the beginning of His public ministry, He enters upon His work, and there can be only one meaning to His baptism, which is in fullest harmony with that work He came to do. Baptism means death and resurrection. He had no sin, but came to be the substitute for sinners, and so He takes in the very beginning their place, the sinner's place in death. He knew His work before. It is not to be understood as if now He had learned for the first time who He is and what His work is. But publicly He declares in presence of men, angels, demons, and in the presence of God that He is here to fulfill all righteousess. "Suffer it now, for it thus becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (verse 13). No confessing or repenting on His part, He was fulfilling all righteousness. As one has said, "He saw His sheep struggling in the dark waters of the river of judgment, the meaning of the Jordan, and He must go in for their rescue. He must become identified with them, taking their place in judgment that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him, bringing in 'the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all and upon all those who believe" (Rom. iii:22). He knew no sin, was made sin for us, and His baptism declares this. The details of His baptism are not given. Then he suffers Him. He placed Himself into the hands of John and went into the waters of Jordan. Later He said, I have a baptism to

be baptized with, and how I am strengthened until it shall have been accomplished! The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief soon reached that place, when He went into the deep waters of suffering and death, when all the billows broke over His head. His baptism was but a type of this.

"And Jesus, having been baptized, went straightway from the water, and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him; and behold a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I have found My delight (verses 16 and 17)."

Here we have something which leads us still deeper. It is a glorious manifestation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son who has gone down comes out to be anointed by the Holy Spirit, and proclaimed as the beloved Son by the Father's voice. He is anointed for the work He had to do. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. John learned now that He was the true One. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The dove is the type of the Holy Spirit. We are reminded of the dove which flew across the dark waters of judgment, come from the ark, lifted above all judgment, finding no resting place and returned to the ark. And when sent out the second time the dove returns with an olive branch and the third time there was no return to the ark. This speaks of the sending forth of the Holy Spirit in the different dispensations. But here is the One

upon whom the Holy Spirit came to abide. We are reminded of the prophet whose book and experience is a type of Christ, Jonah the son of Amittai, translated, the Dove, the Son of Truth. The dove is, as one of the sacrificial birds, a type of Christ. And through Him and in Him we have the Holy Spirit as the abiding one, the Paraclete. He was poured out after His death and resurrection.

The heavens were opened *unto Him.* This is a significant word which is often overlooked. For Him alone the heavens are open. No one has gone up into heaven save He who came down out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven (John iii:13). He came out of heaven. The heavens were opened unto Him and He has passed through the heavens. In Him the heavens are opened for us, and He has taken us all, who believe, into heaven, bringing many sons to glory. And now a voice is heard. It is not the voice of an Angel, but the voice of the Father. Wonderful fact, that now after He, who is eternally the Son of God, subsisting in the form of God, and who became Son of God incarnate, after He has thus taken the place in death for sinners, that the Father speaks to approve of Him. He had seen Him, His beloved Son, go down to fulfill all righteousness, and now He vindicates Him by declaring, This is My beloved Son in whom I have found My delight. This corresponds to the word in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee. The Lord Jesus Christ is eternally the Son of God, but here in both passages we see Him as the Son of God incarnate. Never could it be said of Him as the Only begotten of the Father, This day

have I begotten Thee. Equally true is it that eternally the Father's delight has been in the Son. But Romans i:3 speaks of Him as *His* Son, come of David's seed according to flesh, marked out as Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness by *resurrection of the dead* Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the first begotten, and in Acts xiii we have the true application of that word, Thou art My Son—"having raised up Jesus;" as it is also written in the second Psalm, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" —it is then in resurrection, by the resurrection from the dead that He is marked out Son of God.

And thus we see it here. In going down into Jordan He typifies His own death, but His coming up straightway is the type of resurrection, and in this coming up the Father's voice is heard declaring Him the well beloved. "Therefore doth My Father love Me—because I lay down My life that I might take it again". Well pleasing to the Father He was, and how else could it be with the Sinless One, who was made like unto His brethren. It is then seen from the baptism of our Lord that He is the Lamb of God for the sacrifice, even as John recognized it in pointing to Him, Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. He is perfectly pleasing to the Father, and by the Holy Spirit who came upon Him He is consecrated to the work before Him. It is also clear from these meditations that the baptism of the Lord is typical of His death and resurrection.

And now, after all this took place and He entered thus upon His official work—*then* Jesus was carried up into the

wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil (chap. iv:1).

Many other teachings could be given in connection with the third chapter in which we tarried longer than we expected. How rich, how unfathomable is God's Word! Divine from beginning to end, a living Word, energetic, and sharper than any two-edged sword. May we praise our God for His written Word, and for Him who is the living Word, who took our place in death, delivered for our offences, but raised from the dead on account of our justification. All honor and praise and glory to Him who loveth us and has washed us, to Him the Son who has made us sons, and in whom we hear the Father's loving voice. "And because ye are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father" (Gal. iv:6).

CHAPTER IV.

The first part of this chapter gives us the history of the temptation of the King. This is a most important topic, many-sided in its applications; large volumes have been written on it without exhausting it. We will therefore have to confine ourselves to the bringing out of some of the most important teachings, without attempting to go into many of the precious details and applications to the believer.

The baptism marked, as we saw in the last chapter, our Lord's entrance upon His official work. He is declared as the Son of God by His Father, and anointed with the Holy Spirit; and the third act is that He, who is declared the Son of God, anointed with the Spirit, come to do the eternal will of God, to suffer and to die, is to be tempted by the devil. "*Then* was Jesus carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit" (verse 1). It came immediately after he had come out of the waters. There was no interval between. This is seen from the Gospel of Mark. "And *immediately* the Spirit drives Him out into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). It was the first thing to be done in fulfilling the Scriptures. He was *carried* into the wilderness, and in Mark it is stronger still: *driven there*. Some have said, as if our Lord was anxious to meet the enemy, desirous of coming face to face with that old serpent, the devil, who has the power of death, and whom to annul He had come. But that cannot be. If

it had been our Lord Himself who hastens impatiently to meet the adversary, He would have been the tempter of the Evil one. Not His Spirit drove Him, but the Spirit carried Him into the wilderness. It was the Holy Spirit who took Him to meet the enemy. The Spirit, who had come upon Him and rested on Him—He impels Him. The Christ, the second man and last Adam, meets the devil in another place, far different from the garden where Adam and Eve had their abode. What a contrast! Even the earth, though good and perfect it was, did not seem to be a good enough place for Adam and Eve. So the Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food (Gen. ii:8, 9). What a beautiful spot that garden must have been! Surrounded by all this, with all wants supplied, the enemy came to tempt, and with it came the failure. But here is the second Man, and He is not brought into a garden, but He is driven into the wilderness—"the great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and thirsty ground where was no water" (Deut. viii :15). He was there in the wilderness with the wild beasts (Mark i:13). In that terrible wilderness, surrounded by serpents, scorpions, adders and the wild beasts, the Messiah, the King, stands to meet the foe. And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He hungered; His blessed body, a body of flesh and blood, felt hunger and thirst. How reduced in His outward appearing He must have been, the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief!

We would call attention to the fact, that the tempter did not come to Him for forty days, as it is often said in misquoting scripture, but *afterward,* when, having fasted, he came to Him.

And the *tempter* came to Him. It is the adversary, the accuser of the brethren, that old serpent, the devil. He is as truly a person as God and our Lord is a person. How terrible it is that in the very midst of Christendom the personality of the devil is denied. If there is no personal devil there is no need of a personal Saviour. The "new" theology, whose father the devil is himself, has no use for a belief in the personal devil. That person is simply put down as an invention of the dark middle ages, and spoken of as an old relic, which still survives in the minds of some old fogies. It is no longer a person with most of these modern theologians, but an evil principle. The Lord's temptations, according to this new interpretation, were only imaginations, they were the workings of the mind, a kind of weakness which was produced by the prolonged fastings. If we ask these men who got rid of the personal devil, how they can explain the belief of the Jews in a personal devil and in the demons, as well as the demoniacal possessions in the days of our Lord? they answer us and say, The Jews brought this superstition from the Babylonian captivity. But if we ask these "critics" Why, then did the Lord and His apostles not correct so grave an error? they give us an answer which dishonors our Lord. The denial of the existence of a personal devil, as it is becoming almost universal in Christendom, is surely the masterpiece of all the dreadful work

Satan has done, and we can well imagine what fiendish joy he must have in seeing his existence denied, and by and by he will have the world in security ensnared by his delusions. Then, when he himself and with him his demons are cast out of heaven into the earth, the earth will know that there is a personal devil, for he comes on the earth and brings with it that which is his work, the great tribulation. His wrath will be great for a short time (Rev. xii). What a terrible awakening that will be for all those who denied the existence of that Evil one! The dreadful chain in denying the personality of the devil is: *No devil, no sin, no judgment, no wrath, no atonement, no Saviour, and at last no God.*

We do not know in what form of a person the devil appeared to our Lord. There is a scripture which tells us of a form he took that is in Genesis the third chapter. The serpent must have been perhaps the most attractive of all the creatures and not as the serpent is now, creeping upon its belly, having become this by the curse. In the New Testament we read that he goes about as a roaring lion and that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Perhaps in that subtle form he came to meet Him, whom he knew to be the eternal Word made flesh.

There is but one more word to be considered before we turn to the temptations themselves and take them up in their order. It is the word *tempt*. It is here where much misunderstanding comes in. The word tempt has different meanings. One of them is inciting or enticing to evil, to seduce. This always presupposes evil present in some form, the

possibility that the person can be enticed and incited to evil, that in the person there is something which responds or may respond to the evil placed before the soul. This could *never* be the case with our Lord. There was no sin, no evil in Him. He is *absolutely* holy. Therefore the word tempt in this form can *never* apply to Him. But the word tempt means also, put to test. To test means to bring to trial and examination; compare with a standard; in this sense *only* it can refer to our Lord. He was tempted means, He was tested as to His ability to do that for which He had come. The test or tempting is to bring out that He is the pure gold, the Holy One, the spotless One, the One who alone can do the work for which He appeared, to put away sin by sacrificing Himself. Therefore the Spirit led Him up into the wilderness. The word tempting or testing has also a special significance in connection with Israel. The Lord, as Messiah and King, is closely identified with His people. He goes through their history, so to speak, and fulfills all, and at last He died for that nation. Israel was tested or proved, and failed. "There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them." The Septuagint translates the Hebrew "Nissohu" with a Greek word which is used in the fourth chapter of Matthew. The Hebrew means testing, to find out if it is really so by a test. The same word is used in Deuteronomy the eighth chapter. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God has led thee these *forty* years in the wilderness that He might humble thee, to prove (test) thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou

wouldest keep His commandments or no" (Deut. viii :2). The Lord, the true Israel then is tested and He does not fail.

And now we come to the temptations themselves. The devil begins to address Him, who has come to crush his head. It would be very interesting to make a careful study of the words of Satan we have in the Word of God. They are contained in Genesis the third chapter, the first chapter of Job, and here in the Gospel. The words he speaks in these passages establish him in his true character, the liar and murderer from beginning, the accuser. He places before our Lord three temptations, the test is threefold.

I. "And the tempter coming up to Him said, *If* thou be Son of God, speak that these stones may become bread."

The answer from the Lord: "But He answering said, It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through Gods mouth" (Deut. viii:3).

II. Then the devil takes Him to the holy city and sets Him upon the edge of the temple, and says to Him, *If* Thou be Son of God cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give charge to His angels concerning Thee, and on their hands shall they bear Thee, lest in any wise Thou strike Thy foot against a stone" (Psalms xci).

The answer: "Jesus said to him. It is again written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Deut. vi :16).

III. "Again the devil takes Him to a very high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and says to Him, All these things will I give Thee, *if*, falling down, thou wilt do me homage. Then Jesus says to

him, Get thee away, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve" (Deut. vi :13).

First, a few general remarks. Twice Satan takes the name Son of God in his mouth. He knew that the Person before him is the Son of God, but he hates Him as such. Later this hatred is fully seen in those of whom the Lord said, "Ye are of the devil, as your father, and ye desire to do the lusts of your father" (John viii:44). The Pharisees and elders of the people, who are seen in the Gospel of Matthew, knew Him as Son and Heir, and with this knowledge they rejected Him and delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. This was surely Satanic. Each of these temptations leads higher. In the first it seems but a small matter to turn a stone into bread. He knew this Lord had spoken in creation, and the heavens were blazing with millions of worlds, now but speak and change a stone into bread. The second demands more, but the third is the climax, when he asks Him, who is the Heir of all things, and in whose name every knee must bow, to fall down and do him homage. All the forces at Satan's command were unquestionably brought to bear in this last temptation. With one stroke of His hand He could produce before Him, who is the King of kings, all the kingdoms of the world.

Only once the tempter says, It is written. He knows what is written and he knows more of the written Word, which is forever settled in the heavens, than all the higher critical professors in the world. Higher criticism of the Word is but his child, his production. But whenever he

quotes scripture it is always in the wrong way. It was so in the Garden of Eden and it is so here. He quotes from the ninety-first Psalm, but leaves out the words, "In all thy ways." Another interesting fact is that the tempter knew that this psalm was spoken prophetically of the second man, the Lord from heaven. What sneering remarks have been made on the Book of Psalms by the critics. What they deny is a denial of the truth, which the devil knows, believes and trembles. Our Lord speaks three times, It is written. What a testimony to the Word of God! He knows no other weapon than the written Word. In quoting the scriptures to the enemy He does it from but one book, that is the book of *Deuteronomy*. More than any other book in the Old Testament this one has been denied an ancient date. Higher criticism has declared and declares to-day, that Moses never wrote that book, but that it is the work of some priest living centuries later. The late J. H. Brookes wrote very pointedly on this, saying, "Our Lord took refuge, so to speak, behind the written Word of God, quoting each time from the book of Deuteronomy, as if foreseeing the contempt with which this precious book is treated by modern higher criticism, and defending it against the attacks of the enemy. It is perilously near blasphemy to assert that He quoted from a book which this insolent criticism declares to be a forgery. For if He did not know the date of its composition He is not divine. And if He did not know but chose to humor a popular error, He connived a falsehood. Genesis tells us of election; Exodus of redemption; Leviticus of worship; Numbers of warfare in the wilderness;

Deuteronomy of obedience; and hence the appropriateness of quoting from this book, which the Lord knew as divinely inspired. It is written, was enough for Him in the conflict with the devil, and It is written enough for us amid all the temptations we may encounter on our way to meet Him in the air."

We will leave it, then, as we suggest above, to the reader to make a careful comparison between the opening verses of the third chapter in Genesis and the temptations of our Lord. The Satan there is the same, that old serpent, the devil. He came to Eve with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and the same he brings to bear upon the Lord. He said to Eve, "Is it so that God said?" and to Christ he said, "If thou art the Son of God." It is doubt, unbelief with which he always advances. He misquoted the Word of God to Eve. God had said, "Thou shalt surely die," and he said, "Lest ye die." He does the same in the temptations of Christ. These hints will be sufficient to help in the comparison.

The first temptation is of course the principal one. Defeated in this one he is defeated in all. He is detected at once as the enemy and with the first victory the whole victory is won. It is the most subtle of all; it appears extremely plausible and one might think it hardly a temptation at all, while in the third it is the most blunt attempt; we might almost say a desperate, despairing attack. But what was the first temptation and what does it teach us? "If thou be Son of God, speak that these stones may become bread." That the Christ is the Son of God as He stands before the

tempter was well known to the evil one. He knew it before and attempted to take the life of the child through Herod, and the demons cried out before Him in terror, "What have we to do with the Son of God—hast Thou come here before the time to torment us?" But it can hardly be said that the temptation is to make Jesus doubt that He is the Son of God, because He is suffering hunger. The first temptation is one in which He is assailed as the Son of man. He was truly man, and this is seen here in the wilderness. He fasted and He hungered. Is there anything wrong in being hungry? Certainly not. It is in this that the subtlety of the tempter shows itself. The enemy comes with a natural want and appeals to our Lord's power to relieve Himself from that want. He is still the same evil, cunning deceiver, who begins with the most subtle temptations. Here one might ask, What wrong is there in satisfying hunger? The Lord could easily have done this, turning stones into bread. He, who spoke in the hour of creation, "Let there be light," "let the earth bring forth," He by whom and for whom are all things could have at once changed all the stones into bread. Later He fed thousands in a miraculous manner. He could have done so now for Himself, but if He had done it He would have been proven at once unfit to be our Saviour, who could die for us. He came to do the will of God. Thus it is written, "Sacrifice and offering Thou willedst not, Thou hast prepared me a body. * * * * Lo I come, O God, to do Thy will" (Hebrews x:5-8). He had not esteemed it robbery to be on an equality with God; but had emptied Himself, taking the form of a ser-

vant, taking His place in the likeness of men. Now the path for Him has begun. He is here as true Man, God manifested in the flesh, but the path is to do the will of God, that eternal will of salvation. The path leads downward in humiliation, suffering, it is to end in the cross, suffering death and tasting death for everything. Hunger is a part of His humanity. Was there or is there in the Word of God one word which could have told Him to change stones into bread? On the cross in deep agony He remembered but a little Scripture concerning Himself, which had to be fulfilled, and so it was by His own request so that even not one of the smallest prophecies about His sufferings might be unfulfilled (John xix:28). But had God given anywhere one word to Him, who had come to do His will that He was to end His suffering as man, His hunger by a miracle? Nowhere is to be found such a direction. If He had entered upon the suggestion of Satan He would have acted according to His own will and that would have been the will of the enemy. He would have taken His case in His own hands. *All* the elements of *disobedience* and *distrust* to God are in it involved. Now having failed in this one thing, having satisfied His hunger and saved Himself by using powers which were not according to the will of God, He would have been unfit to endure the cross and to despise the shame. When it came to Gethsemane He might have shrunk from drinking the cup, He might have called upon legions of angels at His command to deliver Him, and when the billows of wrath and judgment were coming He could not have stood them. Thus the changing of stones into

bread would have shown that He who did it was not fit to die for us, for He had chosen His own will by the suggestion of Satan and not done the Father's will, which is that He should suffer.

This is clearly seen from His answer. He detects the old serpent at once. There is no parleying from His side as it was with Eve. He resists the devil at once. The perfect, sinless and spotless One has His "It is written" to hand and this Word, bringing out the Father's will which He is here to do, ends this first temptation. "It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth" (Deut. viii:3). The meaning of the word He uses here is that man lives truly not by bread alone, but by the Word of God, that is, in obedience to this Word. And there is an application for us as believers. One has said on this,* "We realize the wondrous privilege that is ours, the solemn responsibility that lies upon us. For we are sanctified into the obedience of Christ, and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps" (1 Peter i:2, ii:21). This principle of His life must then be the principle of our lives. If with Him the governing motive was to do the will of God, how simple is it that for us also the will of God must be our motive for action. By every word that goes out of the mouth of God doth man live. What a sustenance of the true life within us to be thus, day by day, receiving the messages of His will guided by that wondrous voice, learning more contin-

*Numerical Bible, New Testament, page 62.

ually the tenderness of His love for us: "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear as the learner" (Isaiah 1:4). This is the utterance of the Lord Himself. How blessed to be able to make it our own, and to have the fulfillment of those words: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eyes."

For the next test the tempter took the Lord to the Holy City and sets Him upon the edge (the pinnacle) of the temple, and said to Him, "If Thou be Son of God cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give charge to His angels concerning Thee, and on their hands they shall bear Thee, lest in any wise Thou strike Thy foot against a stone."

The Psalm which Satan quotes (Psalm xci.) is a Messianic Psalm. He takes Him to the Holy City, Jerusalem, and upon the pinnacle of the temple, because the second temptation is the temptation of Him as the Messiah. Standing upon that high place the people below must have seen Him and recognized Him; Satan was hid from their view. What a test and proof of His Messiahship if slowly He had descended, the laws of gravitation completely set aside, landing unharmed on His feet before the astonished multitude. Would they not at once accept Him? Why should He be rejected if by doing this He might become in the shortest order their leader, their King and redeemer from the yoke of the Roman oppressor? Now Satan defeated had heard the Word upon which the Lord stood. He was defeated by the Word. He comes now with the Word himself, quoting scripture and that from a Psalm which speaks of the Mes-

siah, the second man. However, he misquotes the Word and leaves out the seven words, *"and keep Thee in all Thy ways."* It is as subtle as the first temptation. Here he presents the Word and tries to make our Lord act in obedience to the Word by testing God's Word and by doing so to prove that He is the Messiah and the Son of God at the same time. But why did he leave out those seven words? Because the ways in which He, the Messiah, will be kept are the ways of God. "Thy ways" are indeed His ways. It was not the way of faith in impatience to test the truth of the Word and casting Himself down and to prove thereby that He is Messiah and Son of God. It was impossible that He could have even given this temptation a moment's thought. The answer is at once ready as soon as the tempter has uttered his lie. Jesus said, "It is again written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It would have been testing, proving God and as such again distrust and disobedience. We see how closely the two temptations are connected. It is tempting Him to choose His own will and not the Will of God, to act in His own behalf and to escape the suffering before Him.

It is very suggestive that Satan should demand of Him to cast Himself down from the edge of the temple, and to prove by this act His Messianity and Divinity as well. Our Lord is gone into the presence of the Father with a glorified body of flesh and bones. In a future day He who ascended upon high, will descend. The heavens will be covered with His glory, and He who is the leader and completer of faith, the great Exemplar of faith, in whom patience had its com-

plete, perfect work, will come again in glory and majesty, seen by all eyes, the Messiah-King of Israel, the Son and Heir. Then at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory. The adorable One knew the Father's will; He knew the suffering and the patience, the only road that leads to glory. He begun to go the path, and His face is set like a flint. He could not fail in what He had come to do. Again the old serpent is conquered.

Let us, like our Lord, be patient and go the way which is for us now in humilitation, never murmuring or tempting God. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into various temptations (trials), knowing that the proving of your faith works patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James i:2-4).

And now they stand upon a high mountain. What a picture is presented to our view! The liar and murderer from the beginning, and alongside of him stands He who is Jehovah, the eternal Word made flesh. What must have been His outward appearance with the fasting of forty days, with perhaps the tattered robes which hung upon His body rent by the thorns of the wilderness. The tempter's eyes must have beholden such a weak and frail Person—a man of sorrows, One who knew not where to lay His head. But the scene changes. The serpent hisses, and by his immense power still at his command the darkness of the night and the gloominess of the mountain top are dispersed. Marvelous visions of beauty! Right here is

Egypt with its pyramids and wonderful buildings, treasures of art and precious things. It disappears, and in its place ancient Greece, Athens and Corinth come up in all their splendor. Once more the scene shifts, and now Rome, the mistress of the world, that great city, is revealed. Satan shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. Yes, all the kingdoms of the world, and they are in the tempter's grasp still, are passing by, one startling vision after the other. And when the glory has passed, or perhaps while still in view, driven to the very last, Satan speaks, but now no longer mentioning the Lord as Son of God, but treating Him as mere man. He says to Him, "All these things will I give Thee if falling down Thou wilt do me homage." The very words speak of despair. All things are His—all the kingdoms of the world and their glory shall yet be the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the prince of this world, whose eternal abode with all his demons is the lake of fire, could dare and stand by Him who is the King, the second Man, and offer all the world to Him. Perhaps the very appearance of our Lord may have brought the tempter to this despondent act. But when all the kingdoms of the world and their glory pass along and the eyes of Jesus rest upon them, what thoughts must have been His? What did He behold in all the grand and glorious scenes? Surely we can venture to say that He must have thought of this poor, benighted world under sin, death and judgment, in the grasp of this dark and dreadful being standing there at His side. And He had come to be the Lamb of God and to take away the sin of the World. He

had come to annul him, who has the might of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews ii:14). That He is the future heir of all things Satan must have felt, and now he offers Him all at once to turn over all the kingdoms of the world and their glory to Him if He will but do him homage—again if He but turn aside from the will of God. It is now clear that Satan feared Him going that path of faith as the second man—going it to the very end where He would crush the serpent's head. Through death, through His death on the cross, the might of death in the devil's hand, and eventually the control over this world, were to be wrested from Satan's hands. All three temptations bring this out, "The tempter would keep Him back from doing the will of God." But our Lord has gone that way. He was obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. God has exalted Him, the eternal victor, by whom we are forever separated from sin and death. He has put all things in subjection under His feet; He has left nothing unsubject to Him. He has been welcomed in heaven by the Father and taken His place at His right hand, waiting till the time comes when heaven and earth shall be shaken, when He, the First-born, is brought into the habitable world, and with Him in glory the many sons, and when at last the glorious shout shall ascend, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and forever."

With threatening, defying words the Lord might have hurled the tempter down the mountainside, but it is a majestic "Get thee away, Satan" (He calls him now by name),

"for it is written, Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve." The devil leaves Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. What a ministry that must have been!

Satan could not conquer Him. He has met Him whom he could not harm, and the temptations were the tests and show that our Lord is He, the only One who is able to do the work He came to do. But the tempter has gone on with the same temptations, and how astonishingly he has succeeded in that monstrosity which calls itself Christendom! He has brought about a perfect blindness. Christendom attempts to rule, to control the world, to be on the throne; world-conquest, influence and power are its watchwords. Christendom has bowed the knee before Satan. It would not go the way the Lord went, doing the will of God, in obedience, patience and suffering, and then the glory. Hence Christendom has become the enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The remainder of the fourth chapter describes the entrance of our Lord upon His public ministry. The ministry which the Holy Spirit describes in Matthew is the Galilean. The events which show Him and make Him known as the true Messiah, the Jehovah-Jesus, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, are vividly described. As Jehovah in the earth, He does miracles, announces the kingdom of heaven to be at hand, but soon is in want, despised and rejected by the leaders of the nation and by the nation itself. The events of His Judean ministry in Jerusalem are passed over in Matthew. The fourth Gospel describes these events in

detail, in which He is manifested as the only-begotten of the Father. There has been and is still a great deal of wrestling, so to speak, with these events as they are recorded in the different Gospels, to arrange them in a perfect chronological order, or, as it is said, to harmonize the Gospel records. The infidels of all ages have made the most of it to prove contradictions, and the rationalistic preachers and professors in the camp of Christendom have generally founded their accusations of numerous contradictions in the New Testament upon these apparent discrepancies, which they think exist in the different statements concerning the public ministry of our Lord. The Holy Spirit could have written a perfect account of the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ and arrange a biography of Him accounting for every detail, but He has not done this. To charge the writers of the Gospel with ignorance of certain facts is charging the Holy Spirit with it. In each Gospel the Holy Spirit makes prominent the events which are calculated to impress the specific teachings of the respective Gospels, and He has always arranged the events in such an order to suit Himself. Every Gospel is therefore to be studied and read separately from the others. They are in their contents not the mechanical reporting of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but the spiritual unfolding of the blessed person and work of our Lord and Saviour as King of the Jews, servant in obedience, Son of man and the Only-Begotten of the Father.

In Matthew we have before us the King and His rejection; therefore in the matter of His public ministry all is brought together by the Holy Spirit to show Him as King

and to bring out as in no other Gospel that He is rejected of men.

We divide the account of the beginning of His public ministry, as given in the fourth chapter, into three parts. The first from the 12th to the 17th verse. Our Lord was in Jerusalem. The report reaches Him there that the forerunner, John, was delivered up, cast into prison and his ministry is ended. This foretold His rejection, and on account of the imprisonment of John, He departed into Galilee. Here we see Him first in His own city, in Nazareth. But we have here only the bare mention that He was in Nazareth and that He left Nazareth to dwell in Capernaum (verse 12). What happened in Nazareth we have recorded in the Gospel of Luke. In the fourth chapter of that Gospel we read that our Lord, after the temptations, returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. The whole surrounding country was stirred up on account of Him, and He entered their synagogues, being glorified of all. In the synagogue of Nazareth the scroll of Isaiah was handed to Him, from which He read the opening verse of the lxi chapter, stopping in the middle of a sentence, and began to say to them, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears." And there in the city where He was brought up they said, "Is not this the son of Joseph?"* But the starting point of the Galilean ministry and its career is not Nazareth, but the place called Capernaum, that is, "village of comfort," and there

*In a little pamphlet. "The Messiah and His People," we have described the event in Nazareth in connection with the chapter from Isaiah.

He did some of His mighty works. But leaving Nazareth and dwelling in Capernaum was done by Him in the literal fulfillment of a prophecy, standing in a very significant part of Isaiah. We find the words here quoted in the ninth chapter of Isaiah. It is in the midst of prophecies which are all Messianic that we read in the beginning of the 9th chapter that the great light (the Messiah) was to be seen in the Galilee of the nations. The most oppressed, the darkest and the most corrupt province was to receive the light first. Here we see this word fulfilled. We notice a twofold description of Galilee, namely, as the land of Zebulon and Nephtali and as the Galilee of the nations. Read Genesis xlix:13, "Zebulon shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be for an haven of ships and his border shall be upon Zidon." Jacob's prophecy outlines the history of the sons of Jacob, that is, the whole nation, and Zebulon signifies the time of their rejection, when they become merchantmen. Here in Matthew we see Zebulon dwelling by the sea. So that we have the fulfillment of two prophecies before us —the prophecy in the forty-ninth chapter in Genesis and the one in Isaiah. The same is true of Nephtali. This means struggler. "Nephtali is a hind let loose" (Gen. xlix: 21). In Jacob's prophecy Nephtali stands for the coming struggling and victorious Jewish remnant. Here, then, in the land of Zebulon and Nephtali the great light shines first. Grace comes down to the most miserable, the struggling ones. But here we see likewise something which has a connection with His second coming. The great light will shine once more. The glory of the Lord will cover the

heavens, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings, and when this great event comes, the light will shine indeed upon a remnant of Israel sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. The term Galilee of the nations has another significance. The province was called by this name, because the most ignorant class of Jews lived there and they had become mixed up with the Gentiles, who were very numerous in that borderland. The aristocratic classes of Judea, the learned in the law, the refined and ecclesiastical leaders, yes, all the different sects in Jerusalem, despised Galilee. An inhabitant of Galilee was looked upon as an *Am-Hoaretz* (an ignorant countryman). What good thing can come from Nazareth?—But here, where the people had sunk the lowest, the Lord appears first. That this is again an indication that the Gentiles, the outcasts and despised, were to come first, as we saw in the second chapter, need hardly be mentioned.

From the lips of the King Himself comes now the proclamation, "Repent, for the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh" (verse 17). He announces that the Kingdom has drawn nigh in that He, the King, is standing in their midst to establish that Kingdom. He never said nor taught of a Kingdom *within* them. All spiritualizing on these lines of a Kingdom within, which our Lord is made to teach here in Matthew, is wrong. It is the Kingdom John had announced which He now preaches. He prolongs the message of the forerunner for a short time and soon His lips were closed, too. We preach not the Gospel of the Kingdom, but the Glad Tidings of Grace. A day is coming when

heralds will announce once more the Kingdom to be at hand, and when it will come in the person of the Son of Man coming from heaven with angels of His power in flaming fire (2 Thess. 1).

The second part of the portion here before us extends from verses 18-22. It describes the call of four disciples, Peter and Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. They were not from the class of wise men, learned in the written and oral law, but they were fishers. He calls them away from their nets to be fishers of men. This illustrates what the Holy Spirit later declared through the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For consider your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that He may put to shame the strong things, so that no flesh should boast before God" (1 Cor. i:26). To be a fisher of men, to preach the Gospel, does not demand a classical education, nor the ordination parchments of man. It is the Lord who calls to service. It is not the first acquaintance these four men had with the Lord. They knew Him before. Here it is the definite call which comes to them to be fishers of men. If we want to learn how these men came to the Lord Jesus Christ we must read the first chapter in the Gospel of John. The events there transpired before the Lord departed into Galilee. We see in the first of John that the forerunner was still witnessing; he was not yet in prison. The "Follow Me" here does not mean, as often erroneously put, the call of the Gospel. Gospel preaching never asks to follow the Lord,

but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the "Follow Me" for service. And how simple and refreshing the whole scene is! Their obedience is prompt. There is no excuse and no delay, for the King's business requires haste. They had come to Him, to Whom John had pointed as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and trusted Him for salvation, eternal life, and now they put themselves, their time, their all completely into His hands. The first call in John came to them, as the call from Him as Saviour, and here it is the call of Him as Lord, and they were to be His servants. "And they, having left their trawl nets, *immediately* followed Him" (verse 20). How many questions might have been asked by them? "What about our nets?" "What about our support?" "What about food and raiment?" "And here is our old father. Does not our law say, Honor thy father and thy mother? Is it right to leave our father to toil alone by the sea?"—They left it all immediately and trusted Him for all. And so the true servant of the Lord is obedient to His call and looks to Him, who has called him to service and who has promised from the glory through His Spirit to supply all need. How sad we are made when we look away from this refreshing picture to the modern evils of Christendom. Surely a salaried Gospel ministry is unscriptural. And then to think of all the evil, dishonor to the Lord and reproach upon His Name which is sometimes associated with it.

In the third section we see our Lord making the whole round of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom and healing every disease

and every bodily weakness among the people. The work done was threefold—teaching, which was exclusively done in their synagogues, and that was expounding the scriptures, the law and the prophets. The meeting in the synagogue in Nazareth referred to above was repeated in many other synagogues. Preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom, which may have been done mostly to the large crowds of people who flocked around Him in public places, in the streets and at the side of the mountains. Closely connected with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom was the healing of every disease not spiritual, but every bodily disease and weakness. The healing of disease is always connected with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The healings were signs that the King is the Jehovah and that the Kingdom had drawn nigh. These signs of healing every disease are the powers of the world to come. Later in our exegesis of the eighth chapter we hope to consider the question of healing more fully in all its far-reaching importance. Here we point out simply the fact, that it is not the Gospel of Grace which is preached, but that of the Kingdom. The Gospel of Grace needs no sign outwardly by healing of disease to demonstrate that it is God-given. Nowhere in the Epistles have we the promise that Gospel preaching is to be connected with healing of every bodily weakness and disease. However, it is very significant that the question of healing of every disease by supernatural power is made so prominent in our days. It is but an indication of the nearness of the coming dispensation, when the earth shall be delivered with its groaning creation.

His fame then went forth into the whole of Syria. And now they flock to Him. What a multitude it must have been! Satan had his mighty power resting upon that land. He knew that Christ had come to make an end of his power, hence he troubled his poor slaves with terrible diseases and by his demons took possession of his victims. There were various pains and diseases, those possessed by demons, and lunatics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Once more the prince of this world will attempt to have the world in his control. An evil day is coming for this world. Even now there is an increase of crimes and forms of insanity which indicate demoniacal possession. China and other countries are full of it. In our own land there are unquestionably those who have familiar spirits, known under the name of spiritualistic mediums. But He will come again. He comes when Satan with his demons are in the earth, and in his great but short wrath, torments the inhabiters of the earth during the tribulation. Christ's coming means an end of that awful enemy. Then the Sun of Righteousness will bring healing, and what we see at the end of the fourth of Matthew is but a faint outline of what will be when the Kingdom will have come in the person of the returning King. May that day be hastened!

CHAPTER V.

In the closing of the last chapter we saw our Lord Jesus Christ surrounded by a great multitude of people, which followed Him and who were attracted by the King's presence, before whom the various diseases had to flee. If we turn to the eighth chapter we find the continuation of these scenes we had in the last half of the fourth chapter. Between these two chapters are three very important ones, which are as such found only in this Gospel. The contents of the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters are in the form of a continued discourse of our Lord, commonly called "the sermon on the mount," an expression which the reader knows is nowhere found in the Gospels. If we look through Mark, Luke and John we do not find any such report there of a lengthy discourse; indeed, except a number of fragments in the Gospel of Luke, we find nothing whatever in them about these sayings. When we turn to the Gospel of Luke, we find that the portions of this discourse reported there are in an entirely different setting. We point to that which is generally called "the Lord's prayer." In Luke we read (chapter xi) that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father, etc. Now in Matthew there is no such incident, but the dis-

ciples hear it in a continual flow of speech. We also call attention to the fact that the call of Matthew is reported in the ninth chapter, the call of the twelve disciples in the tenth, here his discourse is placed before these historical events. The Holy Spirit, to carry through the wonderful scope of the first Gospel, has put the words of our Lord together into one continued address to His disciples, in the very midst of the most positive evidences that the King has come and Jehovah is in the midst of His people. When the King is manifest He utters His proclamation. Such is the discourse before us here in Matthew, the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ as King. And if the King proclaims, makes known His proclamation, it must be concerning the Kingdom which He came to bring, preached and offered to the people. Let this, then, be the starting-point of our analysis of this discourse. The so-called sermon on the mount is a proclamation concerning the Kingdom, the magna charta of the Kingdom of heavens.

In the next place let us consider three false applications which are being made of the discourse of our Lord before us.

1. The application to the unsaved, unbelieving mass of Christendom and others, as if in the sermon on the mount the way to righteousness is revealed and human nature's development (as they say) were here shown, for which every man should strive. This, of course, is the grossest error possible. The discourse speaks of the characteristics of persons who *are* saved, who *have* redemption. There is nowhere found in it the word redemption, nor is salvation men-

tioned and pointed out; in other words, the way a sinner is saved is not revealed here, but, as the greater part of the discourse was addressed exclusively to disciples, the Lord is speaking about such who are saved and not sinners. Yet how little this is understood.

In our days more than ever before we notice an astonishing misuse of the sermon on the mount. The saddest of all is that many preachers of various evangelical denominations fall back upon it as the most important document of Christendom; for them it seems to become more and more *the* Gospel, and the consequences are that we hear in our times more ethical preaching, more about becoming better, doing good, improving your better self, etc., than ever before. It would require much time and a great deal of space to show up all the errors which are springing from this application. It is the Gospel of works and of evolution. And as this is done there is less preaching of the utter corruption of man, his lost condition and utter helplessness to be righteous (that which the discourse makes very clear), and the salvation of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, the absolute necessity of being born again, the reception of eternal life, the new nature. As the teachings of the Epistle to the Romans have been and are being abandoned in Christendom, the false application of the discourse here in Matthew has been taken up. There is therefore a continual increase of teaching about lifting man out of his lost place into a better sphere by means of ethical teachings taken from the sermon on the mount. This is done also under the garb of a social Christianity,

union of worshippers (?), the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Not long ago we were told of a reformed rabbi who read in his synagogue on Saturday portions of the sermon on the mount and preached on it to his hearers. This was hailed as a favorable sign of the progress made toward the lifting up of humanity. Surely, if evangelical preachers (in creed at least) continue to progress in this awful direction by substituting ethical teachings for salvation by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and declare, as not a few have done, "the sermon on the mount is a large enough Bible for us," a general apostasy from the faith will soon be reached. There is a lifting up of the sinner from his miserable place into sonship and making him the heir of God, but that is never by the sermon on the mount, by striving to obtain the heavenly righteousness revealed here.

2. There are others who give the discourse in Matthew v-vii an exclusively Christian application.

This is the second false application. We cannot put into the discourse exclusively church teachings and say that all found here is to be applied to the church, and that it is the guide for the church, as some have said. If the Lord had had the church in her heavenly calling and character in mind, the place given to the discourse would be all wrong. The Lord mentions the church the first time in the sixteenth chapter, and if following the sixteenth chapter He had spoken these words we might say that we should find in it the church. He said something to His disciples after He had declared that He would build His church, which applies

to the church. A good deal in the sermon on the mount appears mostly in connection with the earth. The meek are to inherit the earth. The church, however, is heavenly. Not here, but in the Epistles, written after the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and after the Holy Spirit had come down from heaven, do we find all about the church. The magna charta of the church is in the Epistles of Paul, to whom the full revelation of the church was given. Out of this misconception has sprung a good deal of error. People attempt to make the sermon on the mount the standard of their lives; they apply it to themselves in the least details and get into legal bondage. The flesh given so much to legality likes this only too well. Here the greatest mischief comes in, that believers do not see clearly what grace has done, and that their heavenly walk does not spring from a contemplation of a series of descriptions of the character and actions of regenerated persons, but by the fact that we look upon ourselves as lifted into the highest heaven once and for all in the person of our perfect High Priest. A heavenly walk is the outcome of a heavenly contemplation. But this not being seen, professing Christendom, amongst it many true believers, stumble around in the sermon on the mount. In this way it has come about that the "Our Father" (the name next to "Lord's prayer" given to the prayer, our Lord taught His disciples) has become the ritualisic prayer of Christendom, repeated at numerous occasions.

3. The last false interpretation is that one, which makes the sermon on the mount exclusively Jewish.

There are not a few who refuse to consider the three chapters in Matthew as having any reference to Christian believers at all and as if there is no application to be made in this direction and the believer could afford to pass them by entirely and not be concerned about it. This is the other extreme and equally wrong.

In our exegesis of the three chapters, (which of necessity we have to condense considerably) we shall always in every part look upon the sermon on the mount as the proclamation of the King concerning the Kingdom. That Kingdom is not the church, nor is the state of the earth in righteousness, governed and possessed by the meek, brought about by the agency of the church. It is the millennial earth and the Kingdom to come, in which Jerusalem will be the city of a great King. We read in the Old Testament that when the Kingdom comes, for which these Jewish disciples of our Lord were taught to pray, the law will go forth out of Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. While we have in the Old Testament the outward manifestations of the Kingdom of the heavens as it will be set up in the earth in a future day, we have here the inner manifestation, the principles of it. Yet this *never* excludes application to us who are His heavenly people, members of His body, who will share the heavenly throne in the heavenly Jerusalem with Him. Israel's calling is earthly; theirs is an earthly kingdom, ours is altogether heavenly. "In the sermon on the mount we have, then, the principles of the Kingdom of heaven, with very plain references to the millennial earth * * * Yet let it not be thought

that this takes from us the application to ourselves which Christians seek in it. The fuller revelation only completes the partial one; the higher blessing but transcends the lower. Through all dispensations God is the same God, and we are 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Of many things we can only argue, indeed a more perfect (or at least a fuller application) to ourselves than to them. To take from Israel what is hers is only to diminish her and not enrich ourselves. Nay, what has been called in this way the spiritualizing of the promises has led most surely and emphatically to the carnalizing of the church."*

The Kingdom has, then, a heavenly and an earthly side. Both are seen in the discourse, but the earthly is predominant. In itself the discourse is most perfect. The sevenfold division is well known. We mention them here, and will take up each for a very brief consideration.

1. The characteristics of the Heirs of the Kingdom (chapter v. 1-16).

2. The Law goes forth from Zion. It is confirmed and expounded by the King (verses 17-48).

3. The better righteousness (chapter vi:1-18).

4. Kept in the world. Single-eyed, trusting in God (verses 19-34).

5. The judgment of righteousness (chapter vii:1-14).

6. Warning against false prophets (verses 15-20).

7. Warning against false professors (21-29).

*F. W. Grant on Matthew, page 70.

Most of these sections may again be divided into seven parts. The number seven is the perfect number, and as He is the divine King, the perfect King, all that proceeds out of His mouth is perfection. We have seven expansions of the law, seven parts of the better righteousness, and seven petitions in the prayer our Lord taught His disciples.

The first section in the fifth chapter from the first verse to the sixteenth is before us. Seeing the crowds He went up into the mountain, and having sat down, His disciples came to Him; having opened His mouth He taught them. Moses the mediator of the old covenant went up into the mountain where he received the law; but here is a greater one than Moses, the Mediator of a better covenant and the King at the same time. He begins with blessings, the blessings of grace.

The blessings in themselves are most wonderful in their scope and inexhaustible in their meaning. We can but call the attention to a few thoughts in connection with them.

We notice seven beatitudes which show forth the character of those who are the heirs of the kingdom. These are:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Blessed they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed the merciful, for they shall find mercy.

Blessed the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Blessed the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

These seven blessings must be divided into two parts. The division is into four and three. Four is the earthly number and three the heavenly. In the first four we see the characteristics of the heirs of the kingdom in their position in the earth, waiting for the kingdom of the heavens and the inheritance of the earth, and in the last three the inner characteristics as the heirs of the kingdom have them by having become the partakers of the divine nature. Let us remind ourselves once more that the Lord does not speak to *unsaved* persons, but to His disciples. The blessings do not speak of what a person *should* be, or *strive* to be, but what *they are*. All here is contrary to the natural man, everything is strange to his disposition. It is only the Grace of God in Christ Jesus which can produce this. The gift of God is eternal life in our Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself is the true God and the eternal life, which has been manifested and which is communicated to every one who believes and thus hath the Son. Believing in Him we receive life and are partakers of the divine nature. Here we have the description of one who is in possession of this new nature and as it manifests itself. (The first Epistle of John shows the same characteristics). One has said very pointedly: "At the beginning of His career, Christ draws the picture of the person who is to be the result of His work. This is the ideal man whom the Saviour is to make actual by saving him from sin."* How great then the blindness of those

*Weston on Matthew.

teachers in Christendom who make the sermon on the mount, the beatitudes, the Gospel, and who attempt to reform the world by it.

In the first place let us consider that in the seven blessings we have the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the fullest expression of all. He is the highest illustration of these characteristics. It is a most blessed study to see how the Word speaks of Him as the one who was poor and needy, who became poor for our sake. He took that place for us. He could say, "I am poor and sorrowful" (Ps. lxix:29). and, "Bow down thine ear, O Jehovah, for I am poor and needy" (Ps. lxxxvi:1), and again, "For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me" (Ps. cix:22). And He who humbled Himself receives the kingdom. He was while on earth the man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. He Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus and over Jerusalem, and in that night of deepest gloom He offered both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death with strong crying and tears (Heb. v:7). He was the great mourner and He was comforted; heard because of His piety and raised from the dead. We know Him as the One who was meek and lowly in heart. He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street (Isaiah xli:2). And now the earth is surely the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein (Ps. xxiv). Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under His feet (Ps. viii.). As the hungering and thirsting One, He was

here, too, hating iniquity and loving righteousness, His meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent Him. And surely He sees and shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Mercy and Purity and Peace were embodied in Him.

Every one then who is born of God has by grace these characteristics. Poor in spirit is the very first characteristic. The unsaved sinner knows nothing of it. It is altogether the work of the Holy Spirit. It means to take the right place before God, which is in the dust in absolute helplessness. It is the continued attitude of a saved person in the earth, poverty in spirit and entire dependence upon the Lord. The mourning which comes next should not be made to mean grieving on account of personal sin. It is rather over the results of sin, the present conditions of things in the earth. Thus our Lord grieved and mourned. The comfort is that coming redemption from the presence of sin and entrance into that heavenly inheritance which belongs to us in Christ Jesus. But having taken the true place before God, and knowing the evil and mourning on account of it, what is to be our path on the earth? Blessed are the meek! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness! This is the way of the heirs of the kingdom, waiting for the manifestation of it.

When we come to the next three blessings, we find the divine origin of the children of God brought out. It would be very helpful to compare these last three beatitudes with the first Epistle of John. God is righteous, God is light and God is love. Everyone who is born of God is righteous, he

is in the light and he loves. The love of God which comes down from heaven is perfected in Him. Merciful would stand for Righteousness, purity in heart for Light and peace-maker for Love. These are then called the sons of God and shall see God.

But while all this is a true application or rather a faint outline of that which is so richly told out here, we must not forget that there is also a direct application to the believing remnant of Israel. This remnant of Israel will pass through the great tribulation through which the Church (which of course can never be put into the first part of Matthew) will never pass. They will then be waiting in the midst of great tribulations, persecutions and sufferings for the kingdom to come. When the kingdom at last comes, in the return of the king, the Son of man, they will enter in. Let us look at the first four beatitudes from this standpoint. This people will be poor in spirit. The remnant is described in Zephaniah iii., 12, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of Jehovah. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they shall feed and lie down and none shall make them afraid." In Isaiah lxvi:2: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my Word." This elect remnant will mourn in the earth in the evil day. Here is a prophetic description of the mourning of this remnant: "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desireth the first

ripe fig. The godly man is perished out of the earth and there is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood, they hunt every man his brother with a net. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently. * * * The son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies are the men of his own house. (Compare with Matthew xxiv:10 and x:21-23). But as for me, I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (Micah vii:1-7). They shall then be comforted. Their comfort, however, will not be in the heavenlies, but they shall be comforted in Jerusalem, for He shall come and deliver them from all their enemies and restore the kingdom to Israel. They will be as the meek of the earth and inherit the earth when the king comes. Inheriting the earth is Israel's promise; ours is to rule and reign with Him in the heavenlies over the earth. The thirty-seventh Psalm forms a perfect commentary to this beatitude "Blessed are the meek." There we find what meekness includes, both in ourselves as believers and the future believing remnant. "Fret not thyself"—"Neither be thou envious"—"Trust in the Lord"—"Delight thyself in the Lord"—"Commit thy way unto the Lord"—"Rest in the Lord." The meek waiting for the Lord are thus described. But it is of the believing remnant we read in that Psalm. Some day it shall be as it is written there: "Evildoers shall be cut off. But those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the land. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be, but the meek shall inherit the land. and

shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm xxxvii:9-11). They will also be hungering and thirsting for righteousness and shall be filled in the day of His manifestation.

The seven beatitudes are followed by two others which describe the heirs of the kingdom as sufferers and persecuted in the earth. Therefore, because we are children of God, the world knoweth us not, for it knew Him not. Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you. Our Lord here, too, is the great exemplar. "For to this have ye been called, for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering threatened not" (1 Pet. ii:21). The first blessing is for the persecuted for righteousness' sake, but in the second we read, "Blessed are ye when they reproach and persecute you, and say every wicked thing against you, lying, for my sake. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens, for thus have they persecuted the prophets who were before you." This second beatitude stands in connection with the last three blessings. In the first the Lord says "They" and that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," but in the second He says, "Ye." In the first it is the kingdom of heaven, in the second it is the great reward in heaven. The latter is more than the earthly glory of that coming kingdom. This finds unquestionably its fulfillment during that time of Jacob's trouble. There will be the suffering for righteousness' sake during the tribulation as never before and many will be slain of these

faithful Jewish witnesses for His sake. The latter will receive great reward (read Revel. xx:4). It will be the comfort for His earthly people in the coming day of trouble. The suffering of the church, outside of the camp bearing His reproach is revealed in the Epistles.

From the 13th-16th verse we hear what the heirs of the kingdom are in the earth. "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become insipid, wherewith shall it be salted? It is no longer fit for anything but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot by men."

This is in reference to the first beatitudes. Salt preserves from corruption. Thus is the heir of the kingdom to be in the midst of all that which is corruption. But what when the salt becomes insipid? It becomes absolutely worthless and is trodden under foot. It was so with Jerusalem, it has become worthless; it has been trodden down by the Gentiles and Christendom will be that, nay is, in the age of Laodicea. Ye are the Light of the world. This is in reference to the last three beatitudes. This is followed by the exhortation: "Let your light thus shine before men so that they may see your upright works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens." But what light is it which is to shine? Surely this can mean only the reflection of Him who is the Light. "He does not say let *your* good works shine, but let *your light* shine; that is, let Christ shine in *your* life; not that *ye* may see *your* good works, but that men see them; not to *your* glory, but to the glory of your *Father*."

Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts, for the shin-

ing forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv:6). Salt and Light, to preserve and to shine—this is then our responsibility and our testimony we have. But the salt, the preserving, hindering power will at last be taken away from the earth, and the light will shine no longer. What will be left, but unspeakable corruption and the gross darkness which will cover the earth?

The second section of the great proclamation of the King contains the confirmation of the law and its expansion. We can but give a very brief outline and exposition and will be obliged to guard against digressions, which might be made at almost every verse.

We now see our Lord speaking as the one who is greater than Moses (Hebrews iii:12). Sitting upon the mount, He speaks with greater authority than Moses or any one before Him, because He has greater authority. He who speaks concerning the law and the prophets, confirming and expanding, is the one who gave it to Moses, whose fingers wrote upon the tables of stone, whose Spirit revealed the visions to the prophets and testified in them and through them beforehand, concerning the suffering and the glory that should follow. The question which comes to the Jewish mind after reading the opening of the discourse, the description of the characteristics of the heirs of the kingdom is the question concerning the law and the prophets; that is, the whole Old Testament. Did He then come to set them aside? Did He come to make the law and the prophets void? He states at once that He came not to make void

the law and the prophets, but to fulfill, and adds, "For verily I say unto you until the heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law until all come to pass."

A good deal of wrong teaching has been taken from these words; the most erroneous is the one which puts a Christian believer still under the law and teaches from this passage that inasmuch as Christ came not to make void the law so, every believer is obliged to fulfill the law. This is a favored argument with Seventh Day people and others. It springs from forgetting the fact that here we have no teaching concerning the Church or the individual believer as it was made known subsequently in the Epistles. The Epistles make very clear the relation to the law which the true believer sustains, who has eternal life and is in Christ. "So that, my brethern, we also have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ, to be another who has been raised up from among the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans vii:4). We are dead to the law, yet the law in itself is not dead; it is as much alive as ever, and holy, just and good. However, the new nature which we have is the perfect law of liberty; it is something altogether new; yet the old law still exists and has its power, but never for him who is a new creation in Christ Jesus. "The law has been our tutor up *to* Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith, but faith having come we are no longer under a tutor, for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii:24, 25). The law could make nothing perfect, but Christ came, and perfection is in Him and through

Him. What is the meaning of "to fulfill"? It means to give the fullness, to make full, to fill out the law and the prophets. The wrong interpretation comes generally from having only the ten Commandments in view, but there is more than that and more than the Lord's full obedience to the law and fulfilling Himself all that which the law and the prophets had spoken concerning Him. In the true sense of the word the meaning is, that He came to make good the whole scope of the law and prophets. He is come to reveal the completeness of that which the law and the prophets had but pointed out. All that which the law and the prophets teach and predict, the fullness, is of Him and will be fulfilled in Him who came and who will come again. The eighteenth verse makes this clear. Even the smallest letter, the Hebrew "jod," shall come to pass; not even the least letter can be set aside, but all will be accomplished. Here we have one of the strongest words for the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Even the "jod" is of Him, and "until the heavens and the earth pass away one iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all come to pass." All then is divine, infallible and will come to pass. What a solemn declaration of the great King this is! This is in full harmony with the entire testimony of the Word. "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in the heavens" (Psalm cix:89). "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name" (Psalm cxxx:2). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the com-

mandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Morever, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them is great reward" (Psalm xix). In the cxix Psalm the perfection and excellency of the Word is told out in each of the 176 verses, with the exception of two, and the declaration is made, "Thy Word is true from the beginning." What an awful sin, what a heinous thing, the rejection of the inspiration of the Word of God is!

In the nineteenth and twentieth verses the King speaks of the doing and teaching of the commandments. Here we are, of course, altogether on Jewish ground. Then there is to be a surpassing righteousness, or better righteousness for the one who is to enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Their righteousness was their own and insufficient for the entering into the kingdom of the heavens. But does our Lord here teach that a person is by a better righteousness of his own to enter into the kingdom of the heavens and that he is by his own efforts to produce this righteousness? Certainly not. Still the false application, the ethical teachings in Christendom substituting now so universally the preaching of the glad tidings of our salvation, teaches that man is to lift himself up into heaven by his own righteousness. Our Lord speaks not to sinners here, but to such who are saved, and the saved sinner has a better righteousness than the scribes and the Pharisees, who were only natural

men. In possession of his righteousness we do rejoice. "But now without the law the righteousness of God is manifested, borne witness to by the law and the prophets; righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a mercy seat through faith in His blood for the showing forth of His righteousness; in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, so that He should be just and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus" (Romans iii:21-26). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans viii:3, 4). And the outflow of the righteousness of God we are in Him, is His righteousness. But these words stand also in relation to Israel, converted at last and entering into the kingdom (Ezek. xxxvi:25, etc).

And now after He had confirmed the law and made known its immutability, He begins to teach that surpassing righteousness which He demands. He teaches the law in its fullest and deepest spiritual meaning. Here we see all the majesty of the King and the lawgiver. Six times He says "I say unto you." It is divine "I" of Jehovah, who

speaks. And as He speaks here and sends forth the expansions of the law, so will He speak again. Out of Zion shall go forth the law and the Word of the law from Jerusalem (Isaiah ii:3). And when that time comes, then surely righteousness and peace will kiss each other, and Israel, new-born, having the laws in their inmost parts and written in their hearts and the Spirit upon them, will walk in His statutes, and nations will be converted.

Not alone does He show in these expansions of the law, in declaring the true righteousness, His divine authority, but He uncovers the human heart and shows its deep corruption and the hopelessness that the natural man could ever attain to such a righteousness. It condemns every human being. As mentioned before, thousands of unsaved person, Jews and Gentiles have made this first discourse of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew the standard for what they call "their religion." It is a sad statement which is now heard from all sides: "The sermon on the mount is my creed," or "Our preacher preaches only from the Gospels and the sermon on the mount, and never touches the Old Testament or the Epistles" (this was told us), etc. Are these people really honest, and do they know the cutting words of our Lord, words like a two-edged sword, penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart? If they read and are sincere they find themselves all uncovered and naked before Him whose eyes are like flames of fire, before whom indeed all things are naked and laid bare. The words show the

sinner his ruin and his corruption. Condemnation comes from every word to the natural man.

Let us look but briefly to the different teachings our Lord giveth, both to show the true righteousness He demands and to uncover the corruption of the heart.

He takes some of the commandments which He wrote on the second table of stone and begins with the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Murder was the first awful fruit after the fall, sprung as it was from envy in the heart. The penalty of murder is the judgment. This, then, is the letter of the law. It dealt with the outward deed, but the heart itself it did not touch. Now He speaks. "*I* say unto you, that every one that is *lightly** angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment." It shall be as if he had committed the deed "thou shalt not kill." Every one that hates his brother is a murderer (1 John iii:15). "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a word embodying hatred and contempt) shall be called before the Sanhedrim; but whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be subject to the penalty of the hell fire." It will be so, no doubt, when the kingdom will be come into the earth; swift judgment will overtake the offender. But the words lay bare the heart and show the impossibility of man to stand before God, who judges the heart, in their own righteousness. The believer being the partaker of the divine nature, is righteous and loves his brother. Only the reception of eternal life, which is Christ

*The word "lightly" belongs in here. It was dropped in some manuscripts, but stands in the oldest. It is not angry alone outwardly, but even the remotest feeling of displeasure is meant.

Himself, can produce righteousness and love. "Whosoever has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God. In this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, and he who does not love his brother" (1 John iii:9-11). The believer walking in the Spirit will in no way fulfill flesh's lust.

The 23d and 24th verses refer primarily to Israel; in principle they are applicable during this Christian age.

The words which follow are: "Make friends with thine adverse party quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest some time the adverse party deliver thee to the judge and the judge deliver thee to the officer and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt in nowise come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing." The words contain an allegorical exhortation to Israel. It is a short outline of their history the Lord here introduces. Following the expansion of the law concerning murder and hatred, that which they were about to do with their own Brother, it is significant. Israel were the adversaries of Him who had come, and treated the royal Person in their midst as an adversary. They did not agree with Him and have been put into the prison (nationally) under punishment till the last farthing is paid. The lord will perform His whole work (punitive) upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem (Isaiah x:12), and then it will be "that her warfare is ended" or, as the marginal reading gives it (Isaiah xl:2), "her punishment is accepted," and "her iniquity is par-

doned and she hath received of the Lord's hand double (in blessing) for all her sins." Thus explained these words fit in the whole.

The next two expansions of the law are concerning purity and divorce. Not alone the deed itself, which was punishable by a severe penalty, is sin, but every one who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Out of the heart the transgression comes, and the heart is evil. And this is what so many persons in Christendom say is their creed and standard for "religion"! It is the word which condemns them altogether.

The plucking out of the right eye and the sacrificing of the right hand is, of course, never to be understood in the literal sense, but stands for the inner exercise of the believer, who in self-judgment puts that away which is a snare or a stumbling block. But what sinner can do it or will do it? Let him try it. And while there is in our day an increased boasting in a better morality, a higher standard, and a "social Christianity" is attempted and built upon certain words of our Lord in this discourse, it becomes more and more evident that the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh are honeycombing all classes of the professing church and are practiced as never before. So it is with divorce. What dreadful things might be mentioned here! Among the Jews the greatest laxity prevailed in this direction. Even now through talmudical laws the marriage relations may be dissolved on a mere pretext. Our Lord says with the voice of authority, binding ever: "Whosoever shall put away his wife except for cause of fornication makes her

commit adultery, and whosoever marries one that is put away commits adultery."

In the fourth place He speaks against swearing, not against oaths such as are demanded by law, but in a profane way. Heaven, earth and Jerusalem are mentioned because these were mostly used in profane swearing. Significant here is the description of Jerusalem as the city of the great King. This will be during the millennial reign. When the kingdom has come praise will be heard in the heavens, in the earth and in Jerusalem. Now the earth is full of swearing and wicked words, but in that coming day the offences will be gathered out of the kingdom.

The law of retaliation comes next (verse 38). He teaches not to resist evil. This is again a great principle for His disciples. The author of the Numerical Bible says: "There is no supposition of the abrogation of law or of its penalties. The government of the world is not in question, but the path of the disciple in it. Where they are bound by the law, they are bound and have no privileges. They are bound, too, to sustain it in its general working, as ordained of God as good. Within these limits there is still abundant room for such practice as is here enjoined. We may still turn the left cheek to him that smites the right, or let the man that sues us have the cloak as well as the coat which he has fraudulently gained, for that is clearly within our rights. If the cause were that of another, we should have no right of this kind, nor to aid men generally in escape from justice or slighting it. The Lord could never lay down a general rule that His people should allow lawlessness or identify

themselves with indifference to the rights of others. He speaks only of what is personal to one's self—smite *thee*, compel *thee* and sue *thee*."

The last expansion brings forth love. "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love they neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those that hate you and pray for those who insult you and persecute you," etc. (verses 43-48), ending with "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." It is the same exhortation as in Eph. v:1: "Be imitators of God as dear children." The standard for the heirs of the kingdom is then His own moral perfection.

The day will come when such righteousness and love and perfection as the King here describes will dwell amidst His earthly people and will be manifested in the earth. It will be in the day when the kingdom has come and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. But every child of God born anew has put before him the highest standard, which includes all that which the King here expounds and that is in possession of Himself, who is the true God and the eternal life, "to walk even as He walked." "Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

CHAPTER VI.

Our Lord said: "For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (chap. v:20). This righteousness He had taught in His confirmation and expansion of the law, but now He speaks of something higher still. He makes known the motive of this true righteousness, which the heir of the kingdom is not alone to possess but also to practice. The motive is in all to act in the presence of the Father. The first eighteen verses of the sixth chapter shows this in a threefold relation. First, in relation to man (verse 1-4), then in relation to God (verse 5-15) and lastly in relation to self (verse 16-18). The word Father is found ten times in these first eighteen verses of the sixth chapter. The Father sees, the Father knows; therefore all is to be done before Him, the Seeing and Knowing One. Here, then, relationship is acknowledged and made prominent, such a relationship which was unknown in the Old Testament. How we are brought into this relationship to God as Father, and to know Him as our Father, so as to act continually as in His presence, is not taught in the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of John makes this fully known. There we read all about eternal life, the reception of this life, being born anew, born into the family of God, etc. "As many received Him (Christ, the true God and eternal life), to them gave He the right to be

children of God, to these that believe on His name; who have been born, not of blood nor of flesh's will nor of man's will, but of God" (John i:12, 13). This is all anticipated in Matthew, and the Father here is not that "All-Father," as the modern twentieth-century teachers of a Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men teach, but He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead (1 Peter i:3-5). Only such as are begotten again, born into the family of God are children and though they are little children, yet do they know God as their Father. "I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John ii:13). Only such who are children and partakers of the divine nature can act as in the presence of the Father; with all others this is an impossibility; for how can they act and walk before One and do all out of love for One and to please that One, whom they do not know? This is another proof how impossible it is for the unregenerated, who have taken the sermon on the mount as a so-called rule for conduct, to do that which is taught.

Our Lord begins with alms. In the first verse the word alms is best translated (as several old manuscripts read) by "righteousness." "Take heed not to do your righteousness before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens."

Alms are good deeds towards others, charitable actions, bestowing upon the poor, needy and afflicted. Such deeds of mercy and kindness are generally designated by Jews as

righteousness. In their prayers on New Year's day they profess that repentance, prayer and *Zodoko*—righteousness will influence God and change the evil to come upon them for their sins, into good. Under righteousness every orthodox Jew understands alms. It must have been so during the days of our Lord in the midst of His earthly people. How was it done? We believe that the description our Lord gives here was a literal performance by the self-righteous religionists. Alms were given so as to be seen by men, a trumpet was sounded before them and the sums they gave to the poor were heralded through the streets. And is it not so now even in the midst of Christendom? How much almsgiving and charities would there be if it were not for a big display? Such almsgiving, such deeds of mercy are not pleasing to God. Such a righteousness, and done by such a motive, are but filthy rags which give no covering and defile. But so it is among Jews and professing Christians, almsgiving, charities without end, good works to appear before men as religious, and no knowledge of the Father. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does; so that thine alms may be in secret and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee" (verse 4). The lesson here for every true believer is that all our good works are to be done as to our Father and as before Him alone; when we have done all things that are commanded, we are to say, we are unprofitable servants (Luke xvii:10). Prayer is the next which follows. Prayer is that which relates to God. How much might be said on that most

precious duty and privilege—prayer! But we cannot digress here. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hyprocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the street, so that they should appear to men." What glaring contradiction to pray in words which are addressed to God, and in motive they are but uttered so as to be heard by men! What our Lord describes any one can witness still, on any Saturday morning on the lower East Side of New York City. In synagogues and private dwellings many a Jew can be seen marching up and down, or standing still, or swaying his head and reading his prayers. He is attired with the philacteries (prayer-straps), a purely rabbinical invention, and his shoulders are enshrouded by a prayer-mantle. His whole behavior as he takes a prominent stand in the synagogue or before an open window, shows but too well that it is done so as to appear before men. "Hypocrites" is the word with which our Lord designates such men. Yet, is it any better in Christendom? The modern "church prayer meeting" shows only too often the same spirit. We have known men and seen them standing in public places to lead in prayer, and before them a very carefully worded prayer written beforehand, which was read with much pathos. Some observer of religious movements spoke of a leading New York preacher a short time ago as making "beautiful and very flowery public prayers." Alas! without sitting in judgment upon any one, the flowery prayers, human eloquence in prayer, are only too often a form of address to God but only uttered to be seen of men. None is excepted of this danger which

comes with public prayer. It should be with much godly fear and earnest looking to the Lord when a brother rises to lead in prayer. It is to be done as before God and not before men.

Next our Lord tells us that prayer, like alms, is to be done in secret, as unto the Father and not unto men. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to the Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee." No one would conclude from these words that our Lord forbids public or united prayer. It is seen only that He speaks against the mode and manner of public prayer. A believer praying in public should be as before the Father in secret. Later our Lord says, anticipating the church, "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from my Father in heaven" (chapter xviii: 19). United prayer of the assembly and that not in secret alone but in public, yet as before the Father, is a great privilege and attended by untold blessings. "They gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer" (Acts i: 14). "And they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts ii: 42). "But we will give ourselves up to prayer and ministry of the Word" (vi:4). Unceasing prayer was made by the assembly to God concerning him (Acts xii:5). Such was the practice in the apostolic age, and the exhortations given to believers in the New Testament are in harmony with it. "As regard prayer, persevering" (Rom. xii:12). "Perse-

vere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving, praying at the same time for us also, that God may open to us a door of the Word to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. iv:4). "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. iv:6). Secret prayer is here mentioned by our Lord, and surely the true believer is doing this as he looks to the Father only. What joy, comfort and strength it does afford to be alone before God. Here it cannot be done as unto men. The hyprocite does not know nor practice secret prayer, and the professing Christian often makes an attempt at it in a legal way so as to satisfy his conscience. "The Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Some manuscripts have "openly." The day will be when all the secret prayers, that precious ministry of prayer given to the saints who are holy priests, will be made known. What revelations there will be and what reward to the saints for such faithful and persevering ministry in secret!* "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as those who are of the nations: for they think they shall be heard through their much speaking. Be

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*No sooner had Saul of Tarsus passed from death unto life, than the Lord says of him *"Behold he prayeth!"* Doubtless he had as a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" said many long prayers, but not until he "saw that Just One and heard the voice of His mouth" could it he said of him, Behold he prayeth (Acts xxii:14). Saying prayers and praying are two totally different things. A self-righteous Pharisee may excel in the former; none but a converted soul can enjoy the latter. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of the new man; the language of prayer is the distinct utterance of the new life. The moment a spiritual babe is born into the new creation it sends up a cry of helpless dependence toward the source of its birth.—C. H. M.

not ye therefore like them, for your Father knows of what things ye have need before ye beg anything of Him." Martin Luther says on this: "Here He censures the abuse of prayer, when they that are praying make use of many words and babblings; He calls this a heathenish practice, a loose, idle and useless talk, of such who think they would otherwise not be heard. The spirit of the worshiper prays, and because he knows that God will hear him, he dares not use such endless, idle talk—the fewer the words, the better the prayer."† The Pharisees had their long prayers with many vain repetitions. One only needs to take up an orthodox Jewish "prayer book" to see the numerous vain repetitions, repeating phrases over and over again. That our Lord had this first of all before Him seems clear. Yet what else is Christendom but, as one has said, "an unauthorized revival of a departed shade"?* It is an aping after that which no longer exists. The rituals of Christendom with their liberal use of the Psalms in responsive readings, set forms of prayer for all occasions, their chant and rapid delivery, are but the daughters of the old mother—Phariseeism. Here we mention especially rituals which are used at the Lord's supper, generally called by that unscriptural word "sacrament." There are used repeatedly phrases like "Lamb of God, have mercy on us," "Almighty God, have mercy on us," "O Lord, save us." These indeed are vain repetitions, and at the Lord's table when they are used by a believer (who only has a right to the Lord's table) they are worse

†Luther's notes on the Gospels.
*Adolph Saphir on Hebrews.

than vain. Vain repetitions, however, may also be used by such who use no formal prayers, ritual and prayer book. This is often done when the name of God and the Lord is falsely used in public prayer as well as other oft-repeated phrases. Others have gone into an extreme and have declared that the Lord teaches here that a petition should be made only once, and that if we have asked in faith for something once, to ask again is only proof of our unbelief. The Lord teaches no such thing. Our Lord Himself in Gethsemane made the same petition three times, and Paul with his thorn in the flesh had besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him (2 Cor. xii:7).

This is followed by a *model* for prayer which the King now gives. This prayer is generally called throughout Christendom "the Lord's prayer." Where is the authority in Scripture to call it by this name? If any prayer can be called the Lord's prayer it certainly is the one contained in John xvii. It is not the Lord's prayer, but the disciples' prayer This model for prayer has become the formal prayer, the ritualistic prayer of every sect in Christendom. That which our Lord forbids, vain repetitions, is practiced with this divine model by those who call themselves Christians. In the Roman and Greek Churches, so-called, it becomes a good work to repeat so many "Our Fathers," and the poor deceived souls expect blessing in this world and in eternity from the mechanical repetition of so many prayers. This of course is very little different from the prayer machines of Thibet, upon which a certain number of prayers written on paper are placed and unwound before some god or goddess.

In "evangelical" denominations it is not much better. We remember well in childhood, being strictly brought up in the Lutheran denomination, how constantly this prayer was used. In sickness, in pain, in danger, at mealtime, in the morning and at night, in severe storms, etc., it was ever repeated as if a miraculous power indwelt these words sufficient to dispel sickness, deliver from danger and bring blessing which otherwise would not come. It is one of the rags which Luther brought away from the old Roman sepulchre. Yet it is the same in other denominations. In one of the strongest it is used at the burial of the dead, sprinkling of infants, Lord's supper, "ordination" of deacons and elders, "consecration" of bishops, and it is repeated in public by the congregation. All this practice, the use of this model for prayer, as the Lord's prayer given to the Church, to be used by the Church, is wrong, decidedly unchristian, nor can it be proven from the New Testament that it is intended for the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles we read of the breaking of bread, the gifts of the Spirit, the assembly of believers, the baptism of believers, but do we read anywhere in the divinely inspired record of the beginning of the Church that the so-called Lord's prayer was used by the apostles or by the primitive church? Is there a hint anywhere in the New Testament that the prayer is to be repeated in public and used by believers? Not even the faintest hint that this should be so, but many strong proofs and arguments that it should not be so. Centuries passed before it became a settled custom to make the prayer the King gave to His Jewish disciples the prayer for Christians

and to use it in the form and in the way it is used now. An unknown hand then added something to the last petition, "Deliver us from the evil one." The words, "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever —Amen," are an interpolation. They do not belong into your Bibles, for the Lord never uttered them. The revised version (though so imperfect in many of its revisions) has done well in omitting them altogether. When it was decided to use this model for prayer as a prayer, this ending was written by some one and added to it and thus making it a prayer with the "Amen" attached to it. No such "amen" belongs there.

This perfect model of prayer was given by our Lord to His disciples to be used by them individually and previously to the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was then all on Jewish ground; they were Jewish *believers* and as such they received this model prayer and used it in the transition state. There came a day when our Lord said another word to these very disciples who had come to Him with the request, "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." It was in the upper room where He spoke all the precious words concerning the Comforter, all that which was so new, altogether new, that which would take them upon a new ground. He said, *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. * * * In that day ye shall ask in My name"* (John xvii:24-27). This message alone ought to give perfect light and understanding to any of our readers who are in doubt about this matter. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing

in My name." This shows two things: (1) They asked of God, and (2) They asked not in His name. They had then used the prayer He had taught them, and it was a prayer *not* in His name. Now He tells them that they were to ask *in His name.* This, then, is Christian prayer to ask God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When He says "in that day" He means the day which began when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, and this day is still present.* The Christian believer, knowing his perfect standing in Christ Jesus, prays in His name, and that is prayer in the Holy Spirit, who now joins His help to our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groanings which can-

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*When the Holy Spirit was given, and the child was able to draw near to the Father in the name of Christ, you have something different. *The Lord's prayer* so-called does not clothe the believer with the name of Christ. What is meant by asking the Father in that name? Can it be merely saying "in His name" at the end of a prayer? When Christ died and rose again, He gave the believer *His own* standing before God, and then to ask the Father in the name of Christ is to ask in the consciousness that my Father *loves me as He loves Christ;* that my Father has given me the acceptance of *Christ Himself* before Him, having completely blotted out all my evil, so as to be made the righteousness of God in Him. To pray in the value of this is asking in His name. Is there a soul using the Lord's prayer as a form that has a real understanding of what it is to ask the Father in the name of Christ? I believe they have never entered into that great truth.—*Notes on Matthew by W. Kelly.*

The latter is, alas! too true; "they have never entered into that great truth." How sad to see the great mass of professing Christians without a knowledge of what grace has done, without assurance of salvation, constantly "unchristianizing" themselves, cumbered with much service, running to and fro.—A. C. G.

not be uttered (Rom. viii:26). We glance but briefly at a few of the petitions to show how a Christian believer could not use this model of prayer as a form. However, we desire to state once more the perfection of the prayer. Every word here is as divine as He who spoke it. There could be no imperfection about anything He uttered. Many volumes have been written on it and many more might be written to show the perfection of every petition.

As believers we know that our Lord gave the promise and has fulfilled it by the gift of the Holy Spirit, "That if any love Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." We are brought nigh by His blood, and in the person of an adorable Lord we *are* in heaven seated with Him in the heavenlies. The "Our Father who art in heaven" does not give expression to this nor could it be before the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. "Hallowed be thy name" is Jewish. Indeed, the Jewish ritual uses the phrase very often. The believer exalts "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Him whom God has exalted and made head over all things."

"Thy kingdom come." This petition is for the coming of the kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens, the Messianic Kingdom, which is followed by the doing of the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. Here Christendom is the most confused, expecting a kingdom now; a spiritual kingdom without a king. What our Lord taught His Jewish disciples to pray for is the kingdom of the heavens to come, that which John the Baptist preached, and also the

Lord up to the time of His rejection. As believers we do not wait for the coming of the King and the establishment of the kingdom in the earth, but we wait for the coming of the Lord to take us out of the earth. The prayer of the Church is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." Without enlarging on the other petitions or attempting a full exposition of them in their full and perfect meaning we wish only to say that this prayer will be heard once more in the earth and will then be used as it was once used by the Jewish disciples when they were sent forth by our Lord. When the Church is taken from the earth a believing Jewish remnant will give the witness and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom once more. They will undoubtedly use this prayer during the great tribulation through which they will pass, the tribulation in which the evil one is in the earth and famine and many temptations will abound. Then can they truthfully ask, "Give us this day our daily bread—lead us not into temptations—deliver us from the evil one," which is the personal Antichrist. "Thy kingdom come." This prayer will be answered, deliverance will come for them from heaven in the coming of the King.*

Then our Lord speaks in connection with prayer of the spirit of forgiveness which every one who is in relationship with God as Father should exercise. If such a spirit of love and patience towards those who have done evil against us

*We pass over the petition, "And forgive use our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is a legal, an Old Testament petition. Our forgiveness does *not* depend upon our relation to each other.

is not practiced, it means that we cannot enjoy full communion with Him. Therefore, "let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamor and injurious language be removed from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. iv:32). That which relates to ourself follows next: "And when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, downcast in countenance, for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear fasting to men; verily I say to you, they have their reward. But thou when fasting anoint thy head and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not appear fasting unto men, but to thy Father, who sees in secret; and thy Father who sees in secret shall render it to thee." Here once more we have the wrong motive and the true. It was done by the hypocrites in just the way spoken of here. It was an attitude of humiliation of the body, denying self, but only as to be seen of men. What else has been and is all the fasting and asceticism as it has been fostered in Christendom? If one does fast, let the fasting be done in secret as unto the Father and not to appear before men.

In the second half of the sixth chapter we are taken upon another ground. The heirs of the kingdom are seen in this section as in the world, subject to the cares and temptations of the wilderness. We must not lose sight here of its Jewish application. When our Lord sent forth His disciples in the tenth chapter to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom He gave them instructions how they should go about, depending in all things upon their Father in heaven. The disciples thus

sent forth with the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel are the types of another Jewish remnant which is to preach once more in a future day the same Gospel, "The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh." To this remnant going through the tribulation the exhortations have a special application. However, we pass this by and apply it to ourselves as believers, for all which our Lord speaks in this section is for every member of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, as such, who are in the earth, pilgrims and strangers, waiting for the coming of the Lord. We are in the world though not of the world, hated by the world as the world hated Him, but in this world we are exposed to all the temptations and the cares and sorrows connected with an earthly life which are ever coming upon the believer. Our Lord tells us now how to behave in the midst of these scenes, passing through the wilderness, what our privileges and comforts are.—"Lay not up for yourself treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust spoils, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not dig through and steal; for where thy treasure is, there will be also thy heart."—The natural man lives for the earthly things and strives for the things which are seen. His delight is in treasures which are here below, and connected with this life is care, worry, anxiety and at last the loss of that which was cherished and loved. As believers born again we have a new nature and belong no longer to the earth, but we belong to heaven. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above,

where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things which are above, not on the things that are on the earth" (Cor. iii:2, 3). "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things which are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iv:18). While, then, this is our calling it is neverthless true that the heirs of the kingdom are constantly in danger in this present evil age to forget that they are but pilgrims and strangers here. Alas! only too many are like Lot, pitching first the tent towards Sodom and getting there altogether after a while. In these days especially the danger is exceedingly great and the heavenly calling, the laying up of treasures in heaven is often put into a secondary place. The exhortations in the Epistles are but a continuation by the Holy Spirit of this word of our Lord. "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many unwise and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is the root of every evil; which some having aspired after, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi:9-11). "Enjoin on those rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches; but in God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal in distributing, disposed to communicate of their substance" (1 Tim. vi:17, 18). "Let your conversation be without the love of money, satisfied with your present circumstances" (Heb. xxiii:5). How great the danger of looking back to Egypt! But as we follow the

exhortation and lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and that in view of the judgment seat of Christ, where we shall receive the rewards, our heart will surely be there. Thus having our treasures there and laying them up there they are not alone secure, but our heart will constantly be drawn there and in this way kept from the earthly things. And where do our thoughts mostly rest—on earthly or heavenly things? If our thoughts are here surely our treasure cannot be in heaven.

Our Lord continues: "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark: If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness."

These are most solemn words. The believer has a spiritual nature, a heart in which he sees, "being enlightened in the *eyes* of your heart" (Ephes. 1:18). The Word of God is the light and the entrance of His Word bringeth light. The eye, the heart single—that is looking only above to the heavenlies, the whole body will be light, there will be not only a realization of a heavenly calling but also a walk worthy of this high calling, a heavenly walk. But light rejected becomes darkness, and how great the darkness! Truth given, light flashed forth from the Word and not used and acted upon, leads into the grossest darkness.*

Therefore a double service is impossible. We cannot serve two masters. It is impossible that the eye could look

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*This is the deplorable state of thousands of believers.

at the same time to the earth and to heaven. Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James iv:4). Is it then a hard path which we have in the wilderness with no comfort? No, for the very next words of our Lord bring to our hearts that sweet and precious comfort which only he can enjoy who with the single eye looks to things above and walks in separation from the world.

These words (25-34 verses) tell us that we have a Father who careth, a Father who knows and who loves. He who feedeth the birds of heaven provides surely more abundantly for those who are much better than they, and all He asks is trust in Him. "Be not careful"—oh, how blessedly it sounds—oh, how full and rich it comes to the believer's heart. And again it is written "Be careful about *nothing*; but in *everything*, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. iv:6). Be not careful for your life, what ye shall eat. * * * Be careful for nothing. * * * Yet how slow we are to learn it. Anxiety and care, hurry and worry, these God-dishonoring works of the flesh are ever coming up again. How true George Mueller used to say:

"Where anxiety begins faith ends,
Where faith begins anxiety ends."

The lesson can only be learned in constant dependence upon Him in seeking the things which are above.

And what does anxiety and care accomplish after all? "But which of you by being careful can add to his growth

one cubit? And why are you careful about clothing?" etc. (Verses 27-33). We are then utterly helpless in ourselves. Alas! how often we look in our anxiety, in sickness and in health to something in ourselves and to men and man's help and not to Him in whose hands we are so securely and leave it all with Him, committing our way unto the Lord. And all this is applicable to even the *smallest* matters of the daily life. Seeking then first of all the kingdom of God and His righteousness—that is, the things which are above—the promise is given, all things shall be added unto you.

And there is another characteristic about anxiety. It looks unbelievingly ahead. Unbelief draws dark pictures of despair and occupies the mind with a day which may never come. How different it ought to be and will be if we but follow His word, "Be not careful then as to the morrow, for the morrow will be careful for itself: sufficient for the day is its own evil."

CHAPTER VII.

The chapter which follows contains the last words of the great discourse of our Lord. The contents of this chapter are very instructive and form a most fitting end of the declaration of the King. The first few verses contain a warning against judging. We have in the beginning of the chapter something which is altogether different from the last section of the sixth chapter. There we saw the heir of the Kingdom in the midst of the world, how he is to trust in and dependent on the Father and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, his walk undivided and depending. When our Lord begins with "Judge not, that ye be not judged" He directs the attention to the conduct of the disciple towards his fellow disciple. The conduct towards those who are enemies, who despitefully use and persecute the heirs of the Kingdom was mentioned by our Lord before. It is the relation they were to show one towards the other He touches upon now. The principle of this relation is love. In Matthew of course it could not be mentioned in full. In the Gospel of John our Lord leads His disciples into the fullness of it, which here is but indicated, and in the First Epistle of John these precious things are still more unfolded. After He had, as the Lord and Teacher, washed the disciples' feet, He told them that they ought to wash one another's feet. This is the opposite from that against which He warns

here, sitting upon judgment against the other and *exposing* one another's faults.

But we ask, what does our Lord mean, when He says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you"? Does He in these words forbid the judging of outward actions or the present evil? Some have taken it in this sense and gone into that looseness against which the Lord warns later (verse 6). The Lord does not forbid here the judging of actions and evil. If He did, His words would clash with numerous statements in the Epistles. For instance, we read in Corinthians: "For what have I to do with judging those outside also? Yea, do not ye judge them that are within? But those without God judges. Remove the wicked persons from among yourselves" (1 Cor. v:12, 13). It is evident from these words, as well as from the order our Lord has laid down, to proceed with a brother who has sinned (Matthew xviii:15-18), that the individual believer as well as the assembly has a right to judge evil actions. Furthermore, in this very chapter our Lord declares, "By their fruits ye shall know them;" how, then, could we know them if it were not by ourselves judging the persons on account of their evil actions? Certainly judging of things which surround us, as well as persons, when it is our plain duty to do so, is nowhere forbidden. Contending earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, to which we are exhorted in these days of falling away, carries with it the necessity of judging that which, in man-made systems as well as in persons, is offensive to

God and dishonoring to our Lord. The words which demand the separation from that which is evil presupposes judging likewise. This solemn duty we have as believers, in the midst of a perverse generation, standing as we do, at the close of this dispensation. It is to be exercised as in the fear of the Lord and with the single eye to His glory and the honor of His name. Easily and quickly made is the step from the judging, which is duty, to that censoriousness, fault-finding and all that follows, against which our Lord warns and which is sinful.

But what is the meaning of the words "Judge not"? Our Lord forbids the judging of motives, the spring from which actions result. I have no right to judge that which is not manifested to mine eyes. Motives are concealed and known to God alone. He who in censoriousness continually judges his brother's motives and in a fault-finding spirit sits in judgment upon him, assumes the place of the judge, which does not belong to him, but to the Lord only. Two passages, perhaps, from Romans and Corinthians explain the judging which our Lord condemns: "One man is assured that he may eat all things; but the weak eats herbs. Let not him that eats make little of him that eats not; and let not him that eats not judge him that eats: for God has received him. Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own master he stands and falls. * * * But thou, why judgest thou thy brother? or again, thou, why does thou make little of thy brother? for we shall all be placed before the judgment seat of God. * * * Let us no longer therefore judge one another; but judge ye this rather, not

to put a stumbling-block or a fall-trap before his brother" (Romans xiv:3-13). "So that do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord shall come, who shall also both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall each have his praise from God" (1 Corin. iv:5).

And how true it is what our Lord says: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." This is a law, from which the believer cannot escape. A law like that other one in Galatians, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that shall he reap." Many a one has found out the swift working of this law, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you." Many will have yet to learn by sad experiences and much heartache that the execution of this law is never slow. The word was quickly spoken which censured a brother's motives, which belittled him (to lift up the self of the accuser), but it will not take very long, and some one will step up with the same measure and the same judgment and do the same to us. Nothing is so detrimental to spirituality than a habitual censoriousness.

And why, then, do men see the little mote in their brother's eye? Because they do not see the great beam in their own.

If the saint but judges himself he will surely not be forever occupied with seeing the mote in the brother's eye. He will be patient, loving and not surmise always evil. "Love does not impute evil * * * beareth all things,

believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii).

In the sixth verse our Lord warns against the other extreme, which is looseness, the abuse of His grace: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them with their feet and turn round and rend you."* A person misunderstanding the "judge not" may allow evil to go unjudged, and therefore that which is holy and the pearls become defiled and are trampled under feet by dogs and swine—unconverted persons, though perhaps outward professors (see 2 Peter ii:22). To apply the passage to the preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved and to those sunk the deepest in vice would be incorrect. It has no reference to the preaching of the Gospel. We should, however, always guard against any irreverent use of the word of God and the blessed things made known in it.

In verses 7-11 we have the familiar words of our Lord telling us to ask of Him, with the assurance that every one that asketh receiveth. The connection is obvious. In looking at the injunctions our Lord gives not to judge and not to abuse, what He has given, one feels the need of wisdom. Intercourse with God in prayer supplies this need. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James i:5).

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*That incorrect paraphrase called "the Twentieth Century New Testament" has seen fit to put part of this verse in a more *refined* (? !) language. They translate, "Do not give what is sacred to dogs; nor yet throw your pearls before *pigs*." How ridiculous!

And what an invitation is here put before us! How simple and definite the language! How plain it all is with no "if" or "but" added to it. Happy he who takes all these words in their simple meaning and ever uses the royal offer in faith. Of course we would not look in Matthew for the fullest teaching on prayer in His name nor could the words here, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you," be applied to anyone else but believers. This is clear from the words: "If ye then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to those that ask Him." In Luke xi we read the same word, but there it says, "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, however, is no longer in order, for the Comforter has come, and no believer has a right now to ask upon this promise for the Spirit.

The 12th verse in this chapter is one of the most misapplied in the whole discourse of our Lord. "All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, thus do ye also to them: for this is the law and the prophets." This, many professing Christians and others, who make no profession at all, call the golden rule. How many, Jews and Gentiles, have told us that this is the religion they believe in. It is even claimed that in the "sacred" books of the East, the religious products of Buddhism and Brahmanism, something similar is found.*

*Jews claim the same for the Talmud because Hillel taught "What thou wouldst not wish for thyself, do not unto thy neighbor. This is the whole law."—*Talmud, Sabb.* 31.

Yet with all this boast in a rule which they do not understand, no one keeps it nor would think of keeping it. The Lord gives this practical word to the true disciple. He who is born again is born of God. He has the nature of God and that is love. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. * * * Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii:8 and 10). "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John iii:11). "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John iv:19). We see then that the terse saying our Lord puts in the chapter is not out of keeping with the whole. The outcome of intercourse with God spoken of in verses 7-11 will be, acting in love.

This is followed by an exhortation such as He who is from above alone could give and with it the first half of the seventh chapter closes. "Enter ye in through the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there are that enter through it; because narrow is the gate and straitened is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." It is the well-known Gospel text, though not always correctly applied. The gate (door) and the way is Christ Himself. "I am the *door* of the sheep; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John x). "I am the way * * * no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John xiv). And why then is the gate narrow? Not because certain conditions and hard terms are to be fulfilled, but because man does not want to give up his own righteousness and clinging still to his mis-

erable, filthy rags, he refuses God's way and God's door of salvation, which is Christ and Christ alone. Ah, the devices of Satan ever multiplying to keep men away from entering in through the narrow gate! The broad way that leads to destruction was never so thronged in the history of Christendom with such masses of professing, self-righteous, moral, educated, but Christ and the blood rejecting "Christians" as in these days, and still the word is true of the narrow gate and the straitened way that "few there are that find it."

In His closing words our Lord gives a most solemn warning against false prophets, and makes a contrast between the false professor and the true possessor. "Beware of false prophets, such as come to you in sheep's clothing, but within are ravening wolves!" (verse 15). Let us notice first of all that this warning has a special significance for the closing of the age, that is, the ending of this dispensation, the seven years of tribulation and sorrow in the earth. We only need to turn to the Olivet discourse (Matt. xxiv) in which our Lord answers the question of His disciples concerning the consummation of the age. When they asked about this ending of the age they surely meant nothing else but the Jewish age, for of a Christian age they knew nothing. In answer our Lord gives, describing the events which fall into the seventieth week of Daniel, He says: "And many false prophets shall arise." These false prophets will make their appearance during the great tribulation, no doubt under the leadership of *the* false prophet, the Beast, so prominent in the book of Revelation. That there have been throughout this dispensation false

prophets in sheep's clothing and that they are more numerous now than they have ever been before we need hardly mention, yet strictly speaking, the warning against false prophets concerns the Jewish remnant in the earth during the time of Jacob's trouble. Nowhere are we as believers warned against false prophets; we are warned against *false spirits* and *false teachers,* which of course, like the false prophets come in sheep's clothing. False prophets then, after the church is taken, to lead many astray; false teachers and false spirits now while the Church is still on the earth. The false prophets, who will undoubtedly work many miracles and be leaders of the strong delusions, are the visible manifestation of the false spirits which are now at work. When Paul said farewell to the Elders of Ephesus he said: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx:29, 30). How soon this prophecy was fulfilled! Let us remind ourselves of some of the solemn warnings which are for the Church. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ" (Col. ii:8). "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so-called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (1 Tim. vi:20). The very errors and false teachings so prevalent in these days are marked out here. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from

the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. iv:1). And how great the increase of these seducing spirits in our day! "But there were false *prophets* also among the people, even as there shall be false *teachers* among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. ii:1). The so-called "Higher Critics," who sit in wicked judgment upon the infallible Word of God and dishonor Christ, the living Word, are meant here. And where are these men not found throughout Christendom? See also the warnings against false spirits in the first Epistle of John. (1 John iv:1-3; 2 Cor. ii:17; 2 Cor. xi:13-15; Titus i:10, 11, and other passages).

But whether they are false prophets coming in the future or the false spirits and teachers at the present time, they come in sheep's clothing. Anti-Christ himself will first speak like a lamb and have a flattering tongue, and all the prophets under his control will follow him, backing their assertions by signs and lying miracles. The story of Moses and Aaron sent by Jehovah, and Jannes and Jambres sent by Satan and endued by him with power, will then be acted out again (Exodus vii:11). In this way many will be led astray. In our age Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and the false spirits and teachers appear like meek sheep of the Great Shepherd. In the subtle infidelity which denies the inspiration of the Bible, Satan has surely transformed himself thus. There is much talk from their side of "Bible research," and that their work will help in bring-

ing out the truth, and many declarations that they are sincere and earnest Christian workers in spite of their infidelity in the divinity of the Scriptures, but all this is but the sheep's dress in which they make their appearance. We think of other false teachers who deny the eternal Deity of our Lord, the physical resurrection of Him and the revealed facts concerning the dead in Christ and those who died unsaved.* All these soul destroying false teachings come in the garb of truth and light.

Our Lord continues: "By their fruits ye shall know them: do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but the corrupt tree bringeth forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. By their fruits then shall ye know them" (verses 16-20).

What does our Lord mean by fruit? Does He mean downright wickedness? There is no question that immorality and evil deeds are included under the term fruit. Many a false teacher began in teaching error in such a way that the error could hardly be distinguished from the truth, but continuing in error he ended with many of his followers in the flesh. Often behind the most subtle errors the flesh is nourished and an outbreak in gross immorality may

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*We have reference to the *"Millennial Dawn Series."* Thousands have been led astray by these books which appear indeed in sheep's clothing, but within is the ravening wolf who wishes to harm the flock of Christ.

follow. Yet, if our Lord meant nothing but evil deeds and wickedness, it would be hard indeed to detect these false ones. Satan is not so blind as to peddle his lies around by wicked people whose lives bear the stamp of immorality and open wickedness. He does it in quite another way. We were often told of people who hold the most abominable doctrines and deny the Deity of our Lord as well as the atonement, "But look at the beautiful lives they live! How meek and lovely they are! How much good they do! Do not their lives prove that their doctrine is right and the fruit show that the tree is not bad?" This outward moral appearance and a "sweet" temper belongs only too often to the sheep's clothing and is one of the devices of Satan with which he tries to lead many away from the truth and into error—the fruit by which we shall know them may be wickedness in the grossest form, but it means more than that. The word "Do men gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles?" is the key. Grapes and figs speak of *true* fruit. Thorns bear fruit which may resemble grapes, but never can they be grapes from which comes the wine which makes glad the heart of God and man. The soul looking deeper (and we remember the warning is for believers) than outward appearances finds soon that the false teacher or spirit is not in the truth. He tests it by the Word, and finds the fruit, the glory of Christ and glorying in Him, lacking. It is a most subtle substitute for the true fruit—a counterfeit—and leaves the soul empty. A believer, not much taught in the Scriptures, sent us a few weeks ago a question about a certain publication which was

sent to him with the promise of leading him into a better knowledge of the Bible inasmuch as it was devoted to Bible study. We wrote him at once exposing the true character of the paper. He answered, that while he had but little knowledge yet of the Word, and while much seemed to be in favor of the paper which had been placed into his hands, yet while reading he experienced a feeling of emptiness, there was no response from his heart and a lack of joy and peace. This, perhaps, will be helpful to see how a true believer will know them by their fruit.

But in the words of our Lord we have also the most definite teaching of that doctrine, which may be termed the A B C of the Gospel, the total depravity of man, the utter ruin of man, and, therefore, the necessity of the impartation of a new nature. Both, as we well know, are denied by some of the leading preachers and teachers of all the great evangelical denominations. To deny these truths is equal to the denial that Christ is our Saviour. Man is, according to the new theology, his own Saviour. The tree is corrupt, the fruit is bad. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. The tree is good and the fruit is good. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

In the three verses our Lord mentions His own coming day, when He will appear as the One into whose hands the Father has given all things. The whole ending of the discourse brings us into that time. This in itself makes it that great dispensational discourse concerning the kingdom, as we have pointed out in our exposition.

"Not every one who saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in *that day,* Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out demons, and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And *then* I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye who work lawlessness!"

That this has no reference to the Church is evident. The Church meets the Lord in the air, and every believer has in Christ's day to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But at that judgment seat no mere professors of Christ's name will appear, and no "Depart from Me," will be heard from the lips of the Lord, the Head of the Body. Nor does this word here in Matthew refer us to the great white throne. When our Lord says "in that day," He means the day when the kingdom of the heavens is come by His return to the earth. Then many will be found but empty professors, who in spite of their works and using His name were none of His. From this dispensational aspect, we may well look to our times. The name of Christ is upon many lips, and there are many who speak in His name, and do works of power in His name, yet they are not saved and know Him not. Christian Science, falsely so-called, may be mentioned here as well as others. Not outward profession brings into the kingdom and makes one an heir of it, but doing the will of the Father. This is continued in the last paragraph. "Therefore, whosoever *heareth* these words of mine and *doeth* them, is likened unto

a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock, and the rain and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (verses 24-27).

How sublime and yet simple is this illustration of our Lord! Hearing first and doing is the way. The rock upon which he who heareth (believeth), builds, is Christ. Other foundation can no man lay. Being in Him we are safe and secure in time and in eternity. The storm will come, and is even now advancing, yet we have a refuge and a shelter in Him, and as He abides, the Rock, so shall we abide. How true, oh! how true it is:

> On Christ, the solid rock, I stand,
> All other ground is sinking sand.

All which is not Christ is sinking sand. Reader! where do you stand, upon Christ and Christ alone, or upon something else—no matter what—the sinking sand?

Such teaching, such unfoldings of the purposes of God were never heard before. The Pharisees and scribes disputed together, and expressed their human opinions, but here One spake with authority, so that the multitudes were astonished.

CHAPTER VIII.

With the eighth chapter we enter into a new section of the Gospel. This section extends to the end of the twelfth chapter. The King had declared the principles and rule of the kingdom, and now He comes down from the mountain followed by great multitudes. First of all He is to manifest Himself as the divine King, the Jehovah of the Old Testament Scriptures, who is truly come to His own. To them He offers and through His disciples likewise, the kingdom. But soon it becomes evident that His own receive Him not. They reject Him and recognize Him not as their King, and accuse Him, before whom the demons cried in terror, that His miracles were done by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. He then breaks off the relationship with His own, which we find at the end of the xii chapter. These five chapters, from the eighth to the twelfth, contain therefore the full manifestation of Jehovah-Jesus among His people and the rejection of the King.

And how completely He manifested Himself as the King with divine power! Here we have a number of miracles, one following the other, as we hope to show, put in perfect order by the One who is perfect in knowledge, the Holy Spirit. Yet with these wonderful manifestations, the leper cleansed, the demons driven out, the blind made to see, the dead raised, the people deliberately reject Him, and fall

not at His feet to worship Him. This shows the utter ruin and full character of the flesh, enmity against God. It is so still and never can be anything else. Even if now (as it is sometimes said it should be) signs and miracles would be done, the flesh would not be changed by them, *but would still reject Him and turn away from the Lord.* The antichrist, the false king, Satan's masterpiece and counterfeit, will make his appearance in the closing days with all power and signs and lying wonders. He will mimic all the signs and miracles done by our Lord. The flesh will surely accept that false one with his strong delusions. But let us briefly point out the signs our Lord does in these chapters:

1. The cleansing of the leper, viii:1-4. He touches the leper.

2. The healing of the Centurion's servant, viii:5-13. He heals by His word. Faith touches Him.

3. Peter's wife's mother healed of fever, 14, 15. Healing by His touch.

4. The healing of All, 16, 17. His presence among the suffering.

5. He rebukes the winds and the sea, 23, 27. His divine power over nature.

6. The two possessed by demons delivered, 28-34. Demons confess Him Son of God.

7. A man sick of palsy completely restored, ix:1-8. Full restoration of soul and body. "The lame man shall leap as an hart" (Is. xxxv:6).

8. A woman with an issue of blood healed, ix:20-22. She touches Him.

9. The daughter of the ruler raised up, 23-26. Resurrection.

10. Two blind men receive their sight, 27-31. "He openeth the eyes of the blind" (Is. xxxv:5).

11. A dumb man with a demon healed, 32, 33. "The tongue of the dumb shall sing" (Is. xxxv:6).

12. Preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and healing *every* sickness and *every* disease, 35 (Is. lxi:1).

13. The man with the withered hand healed (xii:10-13).

14. One possessed by a demon, blind and dumb, restored, 22. His last sign of this section (Is. xxxv:5, 6).

In these miracles we have before us the manifestation of the King. Jehovah alone could manifest Himself thus in mercy, healing and restoring. Satan may have great power to work signs, yet never could such a manifestation come from him. "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?" (xii:26). With these words our Lord silenced the Satanic accusations of the Pharisees. What He did, furthermore, is seen in the Old Testament in connection with the kingdom. The signs manifest the King as well as the Kingdom. In Isaiah xxxv we have a description of the kingdom as the King is to set it up. He came, and that He is the King and His Kingdom at hand, is proven by Him in doing the signs enumerated in the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. The King and Kingdom is rejected, the Kingdom postponed, and Israel and the

nations wait with a groaning creation for the glorious fulfilment of this chapter in Isaiah. The fulfilment will come, when the King comes back to the earth, then "the ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

And how full is the manifestation of His divine power! Leprosy, the awful disease and defilement, altogether gone. Winds and sea calmed. Demons banished and sent to the place where they belong. Forgiveness of sins followed by the healing of the body. The blind see, the dumb speak, the dead rise! Every sickness and every disease healed. These miracles our Lord did here to show Himself as the King are certainly also typical of the spiritual cleansing, the opening of the eyes of the blind, the sinner, the speaking in praise and worship of those who never spoke to God or of God, the raising of the dead, the power and dominion of Satan broken. The application on these lines is evident. We see in them also a foreshadowing of the redemption of the body of the believer in resurrection, as well as the blessings for Israel and the nations, in the coming age. All these features, we hope to point out as we look to the different signs, separately.

Before taking up the first part of the eighth chapter we must call the attention of our readers to another fact. If one looks for these miracles in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and traces our Lord's movements in them, he will be astonished to find that they are put in these Gospels in an entirely different setting. We will not go into details here. In Matthew all has its peculiar arrangement, and every-

thing is taken out of its chronological order. This is nowhere so evident, as in the section before us. The reason is obvious. The Holy Spirit has manifested in it His divine wisdom. Infidels have ever sneered (and do even more so every day) at a verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. The utterances of some well-known "evangelical" teachers, that the New Testament contains numerous discrepancies, is generally backed up by arguments about the miracles recorded in Matthew, as happening after the sermon on the mount, when in another Gospel they are given as having occurred before the discourse of our Lord. Now that which moves the infidel and the preacher tainted with higher criticism to ridicule the divinity and infallibility of the written Word, moves the believer and diligent searcher of the Scriptures to praise, for the very argument which the denier of a verbal inspiration uses to build his infidel fabric on, is to the believer the most positive evidence of the divinity of the Bible and its verbal inspiration. It is not alone so here but all through the Word. The Holy Spirit as the writer of the first Gospel has taken certain events in the life of our Lord and grouped them together in such a way that they not only show us how the King proved Himself King and how He was rejected, but to show in the grouping of these miracles the purposes of God, and bring out some very rich yet simple dispensational teachings. The Gospel of Matthew as the Jewish Gospel is the proper place for it.

We look now at the first seventeen verses of the eighth chapter. Here we have four different signs.

The first is the cleansing of the leper, followed at once

by the healing of the centurion's servant, after which our Lord enters Peter's house, and his mother-in-law being sick, He touches her hand and the fever leaves her. The last is the healing of all. Now in these four miracles, following one the other as they do here, we have by the Holy Spirit dispensational teachings concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. The first, the cleansing of the leper, stands for Jehovah among His people Israel. The second, where He is absent, and heals not by His touch but by His Word; this represents the Gentile dispensation which is still running. After this dispensation is passed He will enter the house again, restoring His relations with Israel, and healing the sick daughter of Zion, represented by the healing touch and raising of Peter's mother-in-law. After this is accomplished the millennial blessings come to *all* in the earth when the curse of sin will be removed. We look at each but briefly.

I. *The cleansing of the leper. Israel represented by the leper. Jehovah-rophe* (*Ex. xv.*) *among His people.* Leprosy is the most loathsome disease known. There was no remedy for it in the Old Testament, nor is there a remedy for it in our times, and we may say there will *never* be any found. The Spirit of God has made leprosy a type of sin, and inasmuch as there is no remedy from the human side for sin, so there is none and will be none from man's side for leprosy. Jehovah alone could heal the awful disease (Numbers xii:13; 2 Kings v:1-15, etc.). This man meeting our Lord as He comes from the mountain was according

to Luke (and he was a physician), "A man full of leprosy" (Luke v:12). The application of leprosy as to every sinner is so well known that we pass it over. The leper here does not alone represent the sinner, but he represents Israel. Long before the Spirit of God had made known the leprous condition of the people in the following words: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Is. i:5, 6). This is a most perfect description of the leper with his wounds, bruises and sores as he wanders an outcast toward still greater sufferings. Here then Israel's Messiah, Jehovah-Jesus, the same who spoke in Exodus, "I am Jehovah, thy Healer," meets His poor, unclean people, represented by the leper. The attitude of the leper as he fell before Him, doing Him homage, should have been Israel's attitude, his prayer, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou art able to cleanse me," Israel's prayer. Jehovah-Jesus stretches out His hand and touches him. He speaks as Jehovah in all His omnipotent power and mercy, "I will—be cleansed." And *immediately* his leprosy *was* cleansed. Thus Jehovah could and would cleanse Israel. He had then manifested Himself as the "Jehovah, thy Healer," among His people. The Lord sends the cleansed leper to the priest and asks him to offer the gift which Moses ordained. This was all proper before the death and resurrection of our Lord. Some have taken this as an evidence that the law should still be kept, but they forget that by the death and resurrection

of our Lord we are delivered from the law. However, the issue here is not the continuation of the Mosaic institutions. The Lord sends the cleansed leper to the priest for a different purpose. The priest was the proper person to pronounce the cleansed one clean. How then had he become clean? Had he used any remedy? No. Had he seen some celebrated physician? No. Jesus had spoken, "I will!" He, who in prophecy, in the law (Deuteronomy), in Ezekiel and Isaiah, saith again and again, "I will," had touched him. Who was this Jesus? There could be only one answer, *He is Jehovah* manifested in the flesh. The priest should have broken forth in song and praise: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people!" He should have run from the sanctuary in search of Him, and having found Him adores Him as Jehovah. But the event closes abruptly. The priest alone heard the story, for the man was told not to tell it to others. The priest is silent; we hear nothing of him. He failed to recognize Jehovah in the midst of His people, and does not respond by coming forth to meet the divine King. The priest is the type of unbelieving Israel. The day, however, will come when the King will come again, and when in mercy, He will speak again to the remnant of His people, "I will." The Sun of righteousness will rise with healing beneath His wings.

II. *The Centurion's servant healed by His Word. Grace shown to the Gentile. Not even in Israel have I found so great faith.* Israel having failed to accept the King, and

not recognizing Jehovah in their midst, the Gentile is introduced. Grace was to come to the Gentile. The Centurion's servant was a paralytic—the type of the helpless and hopeless condition of the Gentiles. The Centurion steps up with a simple, childlike faith. How different from the ritualistic priest who had no answer to Jehovah-Jesus. Jesus declared Himself willing to come and heal him. He, the One who knows the heart of man, well knew that this would bring out the faith of the Gentile. And the Centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not fit that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: but only *speak a word* and my servant shall be healed." In this simple faith there is the fullest confession that Jesus *is* God and able to heal by His Word, though absent from the sufferer. What a grand foreshadowing of the dispensation in which we live and of the mercy shown to the Gentiles! It is the character of the dispensation. Jesus is absent, yet in childlike faith we know Him, and by His Word He manifests His power. It is not healing by touch, but by His Word. Upon the manifestation of "so great faith," our Lord reveals the coming in of the Gentiles and the setting aside of Israel, "the sons of the kingdom." "But I say unto you that many shall come from the rising and setting sun, and shall lie down at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." There is another feature here we must not forget. In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis we read how Abraham refreshed the

Lord. Here after the failure of Abraham's seed the Gentile refreshes the heart of the Lord. What joy and comfort the blessed One had in looking upon this Gentile and "so great faith," and then look towards the cross and beyond it; the travail of His soul must have come before Him, the blessed fruit of His death and resurrection in the coming of them afar off. And are you refreshing and comforting His heart, Him who is unseen now? And surely it is by simple faith in Himself and in His power we refresh Him.

III. *Coming to the house. The suffering woman healed of fever, raised up and serving Him. Typical of Israel's healing and raising up.* In the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, we see a type of what will take place after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The sick woman is typical of Israel. In some of the Prophets we have the comparison of Israel to a woman, a widow, one forsaken, but the promises speak of her healing and that she is to become the minister of the Lord as Peter's mother-in-law served the Lord. We also see that He heals her by touch. So will He come again in relationship with His people and heal them.

IV. *The demons cast out. All healed who were sick. The fulfilment of Isaiah liii:4. Millennial blessings.* "And when the evening was come, they brought to Him many possessed by demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word and healed *all* that were ill; so that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet,

saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases." Later the demons cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Son of God? Hast Thou come here before the time to torment us?" (Verse 29.) The day is coming, the set time, when Satan will be cast out and bound. This will be in connection with our Lord's return and Israel's restoration. *Then* all demons will be cast out. Now not *all* are healed, but *then* the sad results of sin will be removed. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Is. xxxiii: 24).

We come now to the second half of the chapter. It will not be necessary to call again attention to the arrangement of the incidents recorded, differing from the Gospel of Luke, where the scene is laid after the transfiguration. We have learned before that the Holy Spirit does not report these events chronologically, but puts all together in His own perfect, divine way. First, we meet with a scribe who desires to follow Jesus, and then a disciple is seen, who wishes to go first to bury his father before following Him. After this He and the disciples are on the stormy sea and He rebukes the winds and the sea. On the other side the two possessed of demons are delivered. We can touch upon but a little of the manifold application which can be made of these events.

"And a scribe came up and said to Him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou mayest go." And Jesus says to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heavens roosting places, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head" (verse 19, 20).

This man was a self-seeking scribe, one whose mind was filled with idle dreams of a Kingdom to be established and, having seen the manifestation of the divine power, he desires selfishly to follow Jesus. No doubt his expectations were earthly gain, riches and glory. In this respect he may well be taken as a type of the nation itself. The Lord then gives the answer, which showed the scribe how perfectly He understood his heart and read his thoughts. Nothing is heard of the scribe afterward. It was sufficient to discourage him completely. The Messiah had nothing to offer him, and if he would follow Him, it meant that which the flesh can never do. But all brings out the fact of the coming rejection of the King. None of the multitude come to fall down before Jesus and worship Him as Jehovah, only this man comes. Our Lord was on His way to the other side, when the scribe approaches Him with his carnal request. The answer which Jesus gives is also significant. It is the first indication coming from His own lips of His rejection, and for the first time in this Gospel He speaks of Himself as "Son of Man." This title belongs to Him both in His rejection and in His exaltation. Of course, here it refers to His rejection. The words, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven roosting places, but the Son of Man has not where He may lay His head," are generally taken to refer to His extreme earthly poverty. This is certainly correct. He who was rich became poor, that we might by His poverty become rich. He who is the creator of all things came into the earth and made a little lower than the angels, which He had created, took the place

of dependence in lowliness. The Book of Psalms, which so fully reveals Him, the Son of Man, in His rejection as well as in His glory, records His voice as He would speak and as He did speak in the earth. There we read that He says: I am weak, I am weary from groaning, I am poor and needy, I am a worm and no man, I am poured out like water, I am poor and sorrowful, I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am a sparrow alone, etc. But this word of our Lord speaks also of His death, though it is in the xvi. chapter, after Peter's confession, He reveals to His disciples fully the fact of His rejection, suffering, death, resurrection and coming again as Son of Man. The foxes have places where they find shelter when the hunters seek their lives, so have the birds roosting places where they are safe, but for the Son of Man there was to be no refuge; He came to die the death on the cross.

Many there are still who speak of "following Jesus." What has not the flesh attempted in this direction! Some went into poverty to be as poor as He was and others tried to follow Him in His life and walk as Jesus of Nazareth, ever speaking of His earthly life as an example and of "character building" (a phrase so prominent in modern preaching), as if the flesh could ever be anything but flesh. The true "follow me" and the connection of him who has believed with the Lord in death and resurrection, is but little known and understood.

Then comes one who is a disciple. In Luke we read that the Lord spoke to him first. He called him as His disciple.

Here we read, "But another of His *disciples* said to Him, Lord, suffer me first to go away and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead." The Lord who calls asks absolute obedience. He is the first and all earthly connections are to cease. How reluctant to follow the call; how often the disciple, the believer, who is the Lord's when there is the call to service from the Lord, says, "Suffer me first." Some earthly thing, a certain occupation, an earthly relationship intrudes itself between the calling Lord and His disciple. Oh, for more and greater devotedness to Him, whose we are and who is our Saviour *and* Lord. May we be loosed from all earthly bondage and "let the dead bury their dead."

"And He went on board ship and His disciples followed Him; and behold, the water became very agitated on the sea, so that the ship was covered by the waves; but He slept. And the disciples came and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save: we perish. And He says to them, *Why* are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then having arisen, He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. But the men were astonished saying, What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him" (verse 23-28).

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Ps. cvii:28). The "He," who created the sea was in that ship upon the stormy sea and rose in His power and *rebuked* (what a word!) the winds and the sea. How suggestive it all is. He had asked devotedness and obedience of His disciples and now He shows them that He is with

them and in the midst of storm and waves they are secure and are kept and saved by His power. He slept. What calm and rest was His in the midst of the turbulent element when the disciples were threatened with disaster and death. And such rest is the rest of faith. How slow we are to learn it, the simple lesson "Be anxious for nothing." It is impossible for the flesh. Though the Lord may have sent deliverance a thousand times, whenever a new trial of faith comes, whenever a new storm arises and tribulation is before us, the flesh will always fear and tremble in unbelief. But how blessed the assurance that in the midst of all the waves and roaring, in all the attacks of Satan and the world, in all trials and adversities, we are secure, eternally secure. We can never perish. "All things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to purpose;" and therefore "we glory in tribulations." And the disciples with their unbelieving appeals and cries, how often we have been like them! Instead of looking to Him, who is Lord and *our* Lord, we looked to circumstances and cried for help where faith should have looked in rest and silence to Him, who doeth all things well. But where could we stop with the lessons and different applications of this scene! The world and the age, this present evil age, is represented by the sea and His own are upon it, so fearful and of little faith. As He arose then, so will He rise again and will *rebuke* in His majesty as Son of Man the winds and the sea. We speak not only of the blessed fact that in our own lives and experiences He does *now* often rebuke the winds and

the sea, but of His coming again. Then and *only* then will be "a great calm."

Coming to the other side He is met in the country of the Gergesenes by two possessed by demons, coming out of the tombs, the place of death, exceedingly dangerous, so that no one was able to pass by that way. They could not be bound, not even with chains and they cut themselves with stones (Mark v:1-7). Not one demon, but many demons had entered into them; their name in one of them was Legion (Luke viii:30). What awful witnesses, these naked, bleeding, raving and tearing demoniacs were of the body and soul destroying power of the enemy. When our Lord appeared in the land the evil one had by the demons taken possession of large numbers of people and was driving them on to perdition. It will even be worse before His return. Satan and his angels *will* be cast out into the earth and his angels with him. This will be during the great tribulation. And even now those possessed by demons are continually increasing. The ever changing, as well as new forms, of insanity, many of them at least, if not all, must be connected with the influence of these evil spirits. The so-called "mediums" of Spiritism and adepts in occult "sciences" are undoubtedly demon-possessed. Surely our days, the days long ago predicted, are the latter times in which some apostatize from the faith, giving their mind (it is the *mind* where these evil workings begin) to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons (1 Tim. iv:1). And opening the soul to the deceiving spirits and teachings of demons means their

dreadful entering in and taking full possession. We cannot follow here this dark theme, much as it is needed in our days. And, He, the Son of God has come to destroy the works of the Devil, and through death annul him, who has the might of death, that is, the Devil. And here the demons confess Him, that He is Son of God. "And behold they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Son of God? Hast thou come here before the time to torment us?" It is the first confession of Him as Son of God we have in the Gospel. They give Him His right title. The demons believe and tremble (James ii:19). They see and know Him as their future Judge, but they argue that the right moment for the punishment is not yet. The knowledge of the demons according to this is threefold: They know Him as Son of God, as their Judge and that the judgment will take place at a certain time. But Satan with his lies drives his countless victims on in unbelief to deny every one of these facts that Christ is Son of God and the Judge, and the most striking thing is that the father of lies succeeds to put himself down as a myth.

He shows Himself next as the one who has power over these demons and that they may well fear Him. They cried out and then asked, "If thou cast us out send us away into the herd of swine." He said: "Go!" What power over these legions is His! Can they ever touch Him or harm Him? No, never! And Son of God, declared by resurrection from the dead as all power in heaven and in earth and the day will be when *all* things shall be subjected under

His feet. Then "*at* the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings." And we are linked with Him, His victory is ours, we too can triumph over these evil beings. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. "For the rest brethren, be strong in the Lord, in the might of His strength. Put on the panoply of God, that ye may be able to stand against the artifices of the Devil; because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. vi: 10-13).

"And they, going out, departed into the herd of swine: and lo, the whole herd of swine rushed down the steep slope into the sea, and died in the waters." This has puzzled not a few readers of the Word. We may explain it from the dispensational side. The deliverance of the two possessed typifies the deliverance of the Jewish remnant, the apostate part of the Jewish nations is foreshadowed in the swine and they will rush on into the waters, representing judgment.

The account in Mark and Luke goes into details, showing each one of the delivered victims in their right mind. In the end of the chapter we hear that the whole city went out to meet Jesus, and when they met Him, they begged Him to go away out of their coasts. They feared perhaps the loss of other possessions, and rather have the earthly things and the swine, than the Lord. What Satanic blindness! He

the evil one, is seen here in the manifestation of His power in another form. Strange that they should be afraid of Him who is the deliverer! But Satan had completely blinded them. And as we look back over what we were, we can praise our God for such deliverance from such an enemy, for we *were* dead in offences and sins in which we once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who works now in the sons of obedience (Eph. ii).

CHAPTER IX.

After our Lord was requested by the Gergesenes to go away out of their coasts, He passed over the lake and came to His own city, that is, Capernaum. Here the Lord did His greatest miracles, yet they rejected Him there, so that later He said: "And thou, Capernaum, who has been raised up to heaven, shall be brought down even to Hades. For if the works of power which have taken place in thee had taken place in Sodom, it had remained until this day. But I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in judgment day than for thee" (Matt. xi:23-24).

One of the mighty miracles He did in Capernaum is related by the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the chapter which we have reached. He is manifested in this miracle like in the others, as Jehovah. A paralytic is brought to Him by loving hands, and when He saw their faith He said to the helpless one, "Be of good courage, child; thy sins are forgiven." And now for the first time in the Gospel do we read that the scribes said, "This man blasphemes." They did not speak it out, but He saw their thoughts, for He is the One of whom David says: "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandeth my thoughts from afar off" (Ps. cxxxix:2).

He then asks them: "Which is easier: to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye

may know that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins (then He says to the paralytic), Rise up, take thy bed and go to thy house. And he rose up and went to his house" (verses 2-8).

Divine power is here fully manifested. In Luke the Scribes and Pharisees say, "Who is able to forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke v:21). Indeed, if He who spoke the word of comfort and gave the paralytic the assurance of forgiveness is not Jehovah, anything less than He, the accusations of the scribes would have been well founded. He then shows that He has the power to forgive sins by healing the body of the paralytic, who rises up and carries away the bed upon which he was brought. The paralytic is a type of the sinner in his helpless condition. In the Old Testament we have a beautiful type of this in Mephibosheth, who was lame on both of his feet and who had to be brought to King David. So this one is brought. But why did they bring him? No question, healing of the body was all which they desired for their helpless friend and what he himself expected. But our Lord goes deeper to that which is the fountain of all disease and pain—sin. He knew the guilt of sins resting upon the paralytic, and before he could rise and walk, before he could be delivered out of his helpless condition, the sins had first to be forgiven. The conscience, burdened more than the crippled, paralyzed body was by disease, had first to be relieved. The lessons here are clear. It *foreshadows* that which He, who gave Himself for us and who was raised on account of our justification, gives to every one who believes in Him. He has re-

moved completely the guilt of sin and we have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins: the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" is ours through and in Christ. He also has given us a new life. He has delivered us from the power of sin and spoken the word "Rise up and walk." All this is so familiar that we will not enlarge upon it. We should not forget that the spiritual application of "Rise up" is not the first meaning. The paralytic received healing for his *body* and the miserable body was delivered from the paralysis which held it down. So the body of the believer has been redeemed and there will be a "rising up" from the grave and from the earth, changed in the twinkling of an eye. We have also to say that the teaching of remission of sins and what is connected with it is not to be taken from the ninth chapter in Matthew. To teach from this chapter the doctrine of forgiveness, as it has been done so much, would be an error. He shows His authority as Son of Man to forgive sins on earth, and because He has this power and proves it, He manifests Himself by it as God. He is now no longer Son of Man *on earth,* but He will come again as Son of Man, and then once more will show His authority to forgive sins *on earth* and speak the Word of Life to those who are helpless. To this the miracle refers us in type.

The paralytic is the type of Israel. We have a number of such types in the Word. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John we read of an infirm man who was lying helpless in the five porches (typifying the law) and Jesus came and healed him, telling him, "rise, take up thy couch and

walk." He is the type of Israel. In the third chapter of Acts another helpless one, lame from his mother's womb, was lying at the beautiful gate of the Temple. He is raised up and leaps and praises God. The name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene had raised him up. He also is a type of Israel. Aeneas in Acts ix:32-35, who had been lying for eight years upon a couch, paralyzed, and to whom Peter said, "Jesus the Christ heals thee," is not different in the typical application from the others.

It is Israel we have to see here represented in type. What He, the Son of Man, when He comes in glory, will do for His earthly people is seen in the healing of the paralytic. First, He will come and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. He will forgive their sins and remember them no more. And His people, the remnant of Israel, will break forth and sing, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy" (Micah vii:18). He will then say to His people, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Is. xliii:25).

After this He will heal them. His own, poor, blinded, paralyzed and miserable people Israel will be the first of the nations of the earth to receive complete healing for soul and body. They will leap and shout for joy like the lame man in the third chapter of Acts. Therefore it says in Malachi iv, where it speaks of the Son of Righteousness with healing beneath His wings, "Ye shall go forth and leap for

joy (correct translation) as calves of the stall." "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Is. xxxiii:24). The ciii Psalm illustrates most beautifully Israel's coming praise. It is not only "who forgiveth all thine iniquities," but also "who healeth *all* thy diseases." The diseases in this psalm are generally spiritualized, but that is incorrect. They are bodily diseases. The healing of the paralytic has been put by the Holy Spirit in a special place to be in harmony with the whole scope of the Gospel of Matthew. What the Son of Man did in humiliation to one paralytic, the Son of Man in exaltation, coming again, will do to the whole nation and others in the earth in that coming age of millennial glory.

The healed one went to his house. "But the crowds seeing it were in fear, and glorified God, who gave such power to men" (verse 8). This was all they saw and did. They did not acknowledge Him as Jehovah, but simply in their formal way glorified God, which was but the service of the lips.

Besides the record of the healing of the paralytic we have nine other events put together once more in a peculiar order, far from being chronological, but in fullest harmony with the scope of this first book. These are: The call of Matthew, Jesus entering the house and sitting down with the publicans and sinners, the question of John's disciples, the ruler whose daughter had died and the Lord going to raise her up, the woman with an issue of blood who touches Him and is healed, the raising from the dead of the ruler's daughter, the healing of the two blind men, the healing of

the dumb man as well as others and the Lord's compassion for the multitudes.

The call of Matthew, the same who was chosen by the Holy Spirit as the instrument for the writing of this Gospel, is related in a few words only: "And Jesus passing on thence saw a man sitting at the tax office called Matthew, and says to him, Follow Me. And he rose up and followed Him" (verse 9). Had Matthew written this book by himself and not by inspiration he would have followed the custom of other writers in making himself more prominent. He might have begun the book with an elaborate account of himself, his earthly circumstances and spoken, perhaps, at length of the scene which is but rapidly sketched in one verse. The Holy Spirit, however, guided his pen, and in the right place in the right words he records the story of his own call. The place given to it is significant. After the Lord had shown Himself in His power to be Jehovah He now manifests Himself in His grace to the lost and outcast sinner. What a scene it is which the one little verse puts before us! There he sits gathering in the tax, no thought of Him, no knowledge of Him. As a tax-gatherer he was, with his colleagues, despised by the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Scribes, as well as by the mass of the people. Tax-gatherers (Publicans) were known as thieves, who enriched themselves by extortions. Another one said later, after the Lord had entered into his house: "If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I return him fourfold." However, this was not the cause why the people hated him. They looked

upon them as miserable hirelings of the Roman government, who had put themselves under the control of the Gentile rule and helped in the subduing of the land and the people, their own land and their own brethren. The tax-gatherers were, therefore, considered apostates. And such a one is called not alone to follow Jesus, but called and chosen as an instrument to write the kingly Gospel. Marvelous Grace! "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv :16). This is perfectly illustrated in Matthew's case as well as in everyone who is saved by Grace. Well may we adoringly cry out: "Oh, the Grace that sought me!" With no thought of Him or for Him, busied in earthly things for the meat that perisheth, Matthew was called to follow Him. Matthew follows. He leaves the table, there is no bargaining on his side, no request to think it over, no desire to go first to do something else, but the first thing done was obedience to the voice which had spoken. Yet there is no claim of merit from his side in doing this. May we who are His own ever be ready in obedience to His call.

And Matthew invites Him to his house and makes Him a feast. It does not say in this Gospel that it was Matthew's house; in another Gospel the Holy Spirit has made a record of it (Mark ii :14-17.) Here a company of tax-gatherers and sinners are come together, and He, the Holy One, the One who had come to seek and to save that which is lost, reclines with them at table and eats with them. Again we say, what a scene of grace! He who created the heavens and the earth in the creature's place in living touch with those who rebelled against Him! And there they stand,

the poor, miserable, self-righteous Pharisees. They would in their religiousness, with their broad phylacteries, keeping the outside clean, not even touch a tax-gatherer, much less speak to him. To sit down and eat with them would have been in their eyes an almost unpardonable crime. And here they find Him whose words of divine authority they had heard, whose deeds of omnipotent power they had seen, who had manifested Himself as Jehovah, and *He* eats with tax-gatherers and sinners. Not the poor, wicked, self-confessed thieves, the tax-gatherers and harlots appear in this scene and throughout the Gospel as Satan's masterpiece, but the proud, religious, self-righteous Pharisee. John the Baptist with his divine message came, and the Pharisees were rightly called by him the generation of vipers, but never the tax-gatherers and the harlots, who gladly came and confessed their sins and owned their lost condition. "John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax-gatherers and harlots believed him; but ye, when ye saw it, repented not yourselves afterwards to believe him" (Matt. xxi :32). So here we see them, without any faith in Jesus and no knowledge of the God of mercy, wrapped up in the filthy rags, their own righteousness. What else then could they do but speak against the Lord's gracious way? "Why eateth your Master with tax-gatherers and sinners?" And the self-righteous Pharisees of ritualistic Christendom are not different from these, their forefathers, the Pharisees. No heart for Christ, no understanding of grace and no knowledge of God. In the answer our Lord gives He shows that what He does

is in fullest harmony with His having come down into the earth. God would have mercy and He had come to show it. "They that are strong have not need of a physician, but those that are ill. But go and learn what that is—I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I have not come to call righteous men, but sinners."

Then the disciples of John came to Him with a question. "Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but Thy disciples fast not?" John's disciples were having a difficulty. Their master had made much of fasting and had enjoined it upon themselves, but the disciples of Jesus were not fasting. Were they not with Him in the tax-gatherer's house, eating and drinking? It is a straightforward question they bring. They come not as faultfinders or murmurers, like the Pharisees, but as intelligent inquirers, who were seeking light. So the Lord meets them and solves their difficulty by a gracious answer. He is still the same, ever ready to teach and instruct the saint who sits at His feet. The only difficulty is we are often so unlike these disciples of John, though our knowledge and our position is higher than theirs. Instead of taking the straight course in coming to Him first of all, we seek first the solution of our difficulties somewhere else. Perhaps the disciples of John who came here are the same who came and told Jesus, after they buried the headless body of their master.

"Can the sons of the bridechamber mourn so long as the bridegroom is with them? But days will come when the bridegroom will have been taken away from them, and then they will fast." He Himself is the bridegroom and He had

come and while He was with them, mourning could have no place; His rejection was to come and then they would fast. But our Lord not merely answers the question and shows Himself greater than John, who was but the friend of the bridegroom (John iii :29), while Jesus is the bridegroom. He adds something which is of great importance. He speaks of a complete change of the order of things. "But no one puts a patch of new cloth on an old garment, or its filling up takes from the garment and a worse rent takes place. Nor do men put new wine into old skins, otherwise the skins burst and the wine is poured out, and the skins will be destroyed; but they put new wine into new skins and both are preserved together." The old garment is Judaism with its legal righteousness. It is no good and had proven itself as such. No value in it at all, only to be cast aside, utterly put aside. A new garment, a better righteousness was about to be given. He whose name is "Jehovah our righteousness" had come and a change of dispensations was to take place. And now as it has come the old is gone, it is no longer in existence. Yet that which the Lord here but faintly indicates, the impossibility of patching up that which is hopeless and worthless, has been done in Christendom, nay, is the almost universal state of Christendom. It is mixing law and grace together. The rent has become worse. A Judaistic Christianity which, with a profession of Grace and the Gospel, attempts to keep the law and fosters legal righteousness, is a greater abomination in the eyes of God, than professing Israel in the past, worshipping idols.

The new wine is the Gospel of Grace. The old skins* are the law, the Levitical institutions and all connected with it. New wine belongs into new skins. If the new wine is put into old skins, the skins will burst and then there is no wine left and the skins are also made useless. The two belong no longer together. So Gospel and Judaism, Law and Grace do not belong together. The Gospel of Grace enclosed in ceremonial Judaism will result in the loss of the new wine, and ceremonial Judaism, the old skins, will be gone as well. And such is ritualistic Christendom; it is neither Christian nor Jewish. It has not Judaism and has lost the new wine. "They say, they are Jews and are *not*" (Revl. iii 9). If men hold only the form of godliness and deny the power thereof, it will always mean outward religiousness, legality, self-righteousness and turning away from Grace and the Lord Himself.

The ruler whose daughter had died appears next on the scene. He is unlike the Centurion in the eighth chapter who had the greater faith and wanted the Lord to speak but a word. The ruler of the Jews wants the Lord to come in *person* to his house and *touch* the one, without life. His personal presence is demanded to raise the daughter from death to life. That we have here once more dispensational truths before us is seen at the first glance. Israel is often spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures as a daughter, the daughter of Zion. In the short book of Lamentations

*Bottles in the authorized version. Skins were used and are being used in the Orient for the preservation of wine. Hence skins is the correct translation.

alone we find the word, daughter, as meaning Israel, eighteen times. The daughter who has died is then likewise a type of the people. To bring life to Israel can be only through the presence of Him, who is the life. When He came the first time, they would not come to Him that they might have life. But He is coming again to raise up His people, to touch the daughter of Zion.

And while our Lord goes forward to fulfill the request of the ruler, another incident comes in by the way. An unclean woman touches Him and is healed. "And behold a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years came behind and touched the hem of His garment; for she said within herself, if I should only touch His garment I shall be healed. But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, 'Be of good courage, daughter, thy faith hath healed thee.' And the woman was healed from that hour" (verses 20-23). She represents the Gentiles and the grace which comes to them by faith, while the resurrection of Israel is still unaccomplished, but drawing nigh. Faith touches Him now and receives of Him salvation with its precious assistance. But the touching of Him is parenthetical, just as the present age with salvation come to the Gentiles is a parenthesis. Jesus comes to the house of the ruler. It has the meaning of relationship. So will He come to raise up the daughter of Israel. "And when Jesus was come to the house of the ruler, and saw the flute players and the crowd making a tumult, He said, Withdraw, for the damsel is not dead, but sleeps. And they derided Him. But when the crowd had been put out, He went in and took her hand; and the damsel

rose up. And the fame of it went out into all that land." May not the crowd of unbelievers and mockers represent nominal Christendom? Surely the same is in Christendom which we see here. The Lord has declared in His Word, eternally settled in the heavens, His loving purposes concerning Israel. It can well be said of His earthly people, as He said of the ruler's daughter, "The damsel is not dead, but sleeps." The Scriptures are full of promises to Israel and the day of their resurrection and restoration, yet Christendom treats all this with unbelief and ridicule. There is no understanding of God's purposes, the plan of the ages, and hence no heart and no love for the people, who are still beloved for the Father's sake and whose *are* the promises. Our Lord said to that crowd, "Withdraw," and they were put out of the scene, when He came and touched the damsel to raise her up. And may we not see in this also the end of the motley throng in Christendom, which will be put off the scene when He comes to do the miracle of His mercy and His power on Israel?

And when He does this to His people then surely the blind will see and the dumb speak.

In the healing of the two blind men, which comes immediately after the raising of the maid, we see again a dispensational foreshadowing of Israel's present condition and future healing. It is true the miracle of the two blind men who cry to Him is often spiritualized, and we do not at all deny that he has an application in that direction. First of all, however, we must not overlook the original meaning it has in this Jewish Gospel, and as we do this we shall yet

more and more grasp the divine scope of the Gospel of Matthew. "Two blind men followed Him crying and saying, Have mercy on us, Son of David." The two blind men picture Israel's condition as the leper did in the beginning of the eighth chapter. They were blind, when He came and dwelt among them. His own knew Him not and received Him not. But how much greater has their blindness become since they not only have cast Him out, but rejected the offer of His mercy after His resurrection and ascension? Now it is, Let their eyes be darkened. Blindness in part has happened to Israel. When the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, had come to Rome, and in his burning love for his brethren, his kinsmen, had sent for them and in disagreement they began to leave, he addressed to them the Word, so true throughout this age: "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear and not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive. For the heart of this people has become fat, and they hear heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them" (Acts xxviii:25-28). But this is not Israel's final condition. Like these two blind men, so Israel will cry out of the deepest darkness, out of the terrible night of Jacob's trouble, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." Son of David is His title as He stands in relation to His earthly people, and in this passage we have Him called by this name for the first time in the

Gospel. The cry these two men utter is specifically Jewish, and surely no Gentile will cry to Him as Son of David. Later in the Gospel a Gentile woman cried after Him, "Have mercy on me, Lord, *Son of David*; my daughter is miserably possessed by a demon. But He did not answer her a word" (Matt. xv:23). When she called again, she said, "Lord, help me," and after she had taken her place with the dogs the Lord acknowledged her faith. And when thus Israel cries for mercy and waits for the coming of the Son of Man and the Son of David, He will arise and have mercy upon Zion and "in wrath He will remember mercy." "He will return again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah vii:19).

He did not pass by the two blind men. "When He was come to the house (which always stands for relationship), the blind men came to Him, and Jesus says to them, Do ye believe that I am able to do this? They say to Him, Yea, Lord. Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you. And their eyes were opened." So He healed them by coming in touch with them not absent and unseen, but present and touching them. He is absent from the earth now unseen to the eyes of men, yet we believe in Him and through Him on God; we believe, too, that *He is able,* that all power is given to *Him* in heaven and on earth and it is also now "according to *your faith.*" But He who is absent will come back to earth again, back into definite relationship with His earthly people, and *then* and not before will Israel's blindness be ended.

And what these two healed men did, spreading His name abroad in all that land, believing and seeing Israel will do in that day.

Next comes a dumb man possessed by a demon, and the demon having been cast out, the dumb spake. This, too, refers to Israel still under the control of Satan's power. Instead of praising their King, Israel was dumb and is dumb now; but the demon will be cast out, and then Israel will speak His praises and sing the new song unto the Lord. What a day it will be, when dumb Israel is at last the people "formed to show forth His praise!" "And the crowds were astonished, saying, It has never been seen thus in Israel." And in that day when Israel is healed it will be said, "What God has wrought," and all the nations *will* know that He is Jehovah. We learn therefore in the three miracles—the raising of the maid from the dead, the opening of the eyes of the blind and the casting out of the demon from the dumb man—the blessed story of Israel's coming redemption. Israel raised from the dead will see and behold the King, the Son of David, and speak and praise His name. It is not less the way of divine grace with each sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are dead in trespasses and sins. He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that an hour is coming and *now is* (and the hour is not yet passed), when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that have heard shall live" (John v:24), and those He raises from the dead to them He gives eternal life, which is He Himself, and gives them the light of life, His Spirit, to enlighten them and guide them. Out

of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak to His praise who loveth us and has redeemed us by His blood and delivered us from the power of darkness. Oh, how blessedly rich and full in His Word!

But now the dark side. While the crowds were astonished, the Pharisees said, He casts out the demons through the prince of demons. Here for the first time in the Gospel do we find the awful blasphemy of the religious leaders of the people. The power of Jehovah had been manifested before their very eyes. The leper had been cleansed and gone to the priest, who knew Jehovah's power had done it; the tempest had been stilled, the demons cast out, the paralytic healed, the dead maid raised up, the blind saw and the dumb spake; but instead of bowing in the august presence of the King and acknowledging the power, which manifested itself in such a manner, as divine, they attributed it to Satan, the prince of demons. They accused the Lord from heaven of being the instrument of Satan! Awful blasphemy! It is here but the first muttering of the coming storm. The storm breaks fully in the twelfth chapter. There they stand in all their Satanic boldness and charge Him with casting out demons by Beelzebub. They committed there and then the sin against the Spirit. We must reserve the closer investigation of this matter till we read the chapter in which our Lord speaks of that sin. Here we notice especially that the rejection of our Lord began with the blind leaders of the people, the religious, self-righteous Pharisees. It is not different in Christendom with the falling away from the faith.

Our Lord continued in His ministry in Galilee. "And Jesus went round all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom and healing every disease and every bodily weakness" (verse 35). What an activity this must have been! He walked up and down through Galilee, and certainly not one of the numerous villages was forgotten by Him. Let us notice again that it is the Gospel of the *kingdom* He preached, therefore Kingdom signs were present. When He, the King, comes again, and the Kingdom of the heavens is established and the heavens rule, then disease and all that offends will be put away.

But what scenes met His eye as He passed thus ministering among the crowds of people? He beheld them as worn out, harassed and cast away as sheep not having a shepherd. His loving heart was moved with compassion for them. In this loving sympathy He reveals Himself as the Shepherd of Israel. Long before His Spirit in the prophets had spoken of the scene we behold here. "Son of Man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds: Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do not feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? * * * And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, where they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth and none did search and seek after them" (Ezek. xxxiv). In the same chapter we read what

Jehovah the Shepherd of Israel says: "*I* will both search My sheep and find them out. * * * *I* will seek out My sheep. * * * *I* will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries. * * * *I* will feed them in a good pasture. * * * *I* will feed My flock and *I* will cause them to lie down. * * * *I* will seek that which was lost. * * * *I* will make with them a covenant of peace," * * * etc. He came thus to His own as the Shepherd, but they did not want Him. As the *good* Shepherd He laid down His life for the sheep, becoming the *great* Shepherd in resurrection and the *chief* Shepherd in glory. But He is also the Shepherd of Israel, and thinks still of His earthly people and loves them. That thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel will yet be literally fulfilled through the returning Son of Man, and then His poor flock will know Him and sing in the earth what the believer's heart sings now: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." "Then saith He to His disciples, The harvest is great and the workmen few; supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth workmen unto His harvest." He Himself is the Lord of the harvest. He sends forth the workmen and He equips them for the service. But there is a great difference between the sending forth of the workmen to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and to heal the sick, and the gifts, the Lord in glory, as the Head of His body, has given to the church. The sending forth of the laborers into the harvest will be before us in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

We learn now how our Lord, who is truly the Lord of the Harvest, sends forth the laborers. He does it as the King, who came to offer the Kingdom to Israel. He sends forth the laborers into the harvest as messengers of Himself to announce the same message, which He announced, "The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh," and confers to them the authority and the power to heal the infirm, raise the dead, and cast out demons. This sending forth, as we shall see, was altogether in connection with the Kingdom; it was therefore only temporary and ended with the complete rejection of the Kingdom by Israel. However, there is a time coming when a Jewish remnant will again go forth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. This will be during the great tribulation.

It is strange that Christian believers should go to the tenth chapter of Matthew and look upon what is written here as meaning the sending forth of the laborers, missionaries, preachers and teachers to proclaim the Gospel of Grace, when there was first of all no Gospel of Grace and when the words of our Lord so clearly show that it could *not* refer to anything outside of Israel and Israel's land. Yet this wrong application is constantly made. It is claimed by some on the authority of this chapter that missionary efforts should consist in not preaching alone, but healing of

the sick. They send out, therefore, missionaries who are physicians, and supply them with drugs and surgical instruments, as if our Lord did anything of the kind. Others again claim that the healing of the sick, besides the preaching of what they term, the Kingdom of the heavens, is still in order, and they act according to this belief; however, the raising of the dead they do not include in their powers. The Mormons with their abominable and blasphemous teachings likewise go to this chapter, going forth two by two and trying to follow the other commands given. All this confusion is at once ended, when we look upon the sending forth of the laborers here, as the sending forth of messengers to announce the Kingdom; after the Kingdom had been postponed this special mission of the twelve ended.

The first verse in the chapter tells us that He called His twelve disciples and that He gave them power over unclean spirits, so that they should cast them out, and heal every disease and every bodily weakness. The twelve messengers, whose names are given in the second, third and fourth verses, stand as such always in relation to Israel. He tells them later, "Ye shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (chapter xix:28). Even in the New Jerusalem there will be this distinction. "Her shining was like a most precious stone, as a crystal like jasper stone; having a great, high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are those of the *twelve* tribes of the sons of Israel. * * * And the wall of the city had *twelve* foundations, and on them *twelve* names of the *twelve* apostles of the Lamb" (Rev.

xxi :12-14). The twelve apostles thus stand in prominent and definite relation to Israel. Here among the twelve, who are sent forth, is also the name of Judas the Iscariot, who delivered Him up. After his awful end another was rightly and divinely chosen in his place, that is Matthias. It is astonishing to hear able teachers of the Word talk and write of the mistake which the eleven made in the first chapter in the book of Acts in casting the lot and choosing Matthias. We have heard all kinds of criticism upon their action. They were, however, guided aright, and did *not* make a mistake, for they acted upon the Word of God in the Psalms, and in the casting of the lot they were fully authorized by the Old Testament Scriptures, and besides this, they did it in dependence on the Lord. It is also said by these brethren who see in the choosing of Matthias an error, that the Lord wanted *Paul* to be the one who belongs to the twelve. This is the *worst* blunder of all. The Holy Spirit fully endorses the action of the eleven before Pentecost through Paul himself. In 1 Corinthians xv :5 we read that the risen Lord was seen by the *twelve*. In the eighth verse Paul says: "And last of all, as to an abortion, He appeared to me also." It is clear from this passage that Paul does not belong to the twelve. Paul, as apostle to the Gentiles, is an apostle not from men nor through man (Gal. i :1); he received his apostleship from the risen and glorified Lord. It is through Paul as the one who has no earthly connections, but has it all from above, that the Gospel of Grace as well as the mystery hid in former ages is made known.

In the Epistles given through Paul we read, therefore,

all concerning the Gospel of Grace, the church and the ministry, which is for this age, an age in which our Lord Jesus Christ is not King, but Lord in Glory. It is from the Glory as Head of the Body He gives gifts. "He that descended is the same who also ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things; and He has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints" (Ephes. iv :10-12). He ministers then through the instruments He chooses from above, and nowhere in the Epistles do we read anything like that which is contained in the tenth chapter of Matthew. Let us divide the Word of truth rightly and not put the church and the ministry of the church in the chapter before us. All this will become clearer to us as we turn to the different verses.

For instance, in the sixth verse we read: "Go not off into the way of the Gentiles, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is a limited sphere. They had nothing to do and could have nothing to do with the Gentiles nor with Samaritans. After the death and resurrection of our Lord the Gospel was to be preached, beginning in Jerusalem, in Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth. The lost sheep of the house of Israel, that much "spiritualized" phrase, were not Gentiles, nor were they the church, for a church was not and could not be then. Their preaching was only this text: "The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh." What does it mean? It meant that the promised Kingdom for Israel, and through Israel to the nations, the Kingdom

with all its earthly blessings, was about to come. It was heralding the fact of the presence of the King to set up the Kingdom, if His own would have it. Such a preaching of the Kingdom of the heavens is not given now. After the church age closes by the removal of the church from the earth into heaven, as foreshadowed by the vessel which Peter saw *coming* out of heaven and again *received* into heaven, *then* the kingdom will again draw nigh in the person of the returning King and Lord with His saints.

He tells them: "Ye have received gratuitously, give gratuitously.* Do not provide yourselves with gold, or silver, or brass, for your belts, nor scrip for the way, nor two body coats, nor sandals, nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his nourishment." Some well-meaning persons have tried to follow out these commandments to the very letter, but it was never meant for the servants of Christ to be followed literally during this age. However, two principles are in these words before us, which find their application in this age. They had received the message and power gratuitously and thus they were to give it. The Gospel is to be free, without price and without money. This principle holds good at this time. How great the failure in Christendom, with its salaried ministry, pew rents, fairs and entertainments to make money for the building of churches and other things!

They were to go forth with no provision made. This

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*Christian Science also claims to follow this chapter by healing the sick. But "freely give" is not practiced by this wicked cult. It costs to be healed.

made them altogether dependent upon the Lord who had sent them. Trust in the Lord, who sends out the laborer, is another principle, which belongs to this age as well. All disappointment and discouragement for the servant of Christ comes in when he looks not to the Lord but to man. The Lord never disappoints. "And He said to them, When I sent you without purse and scrip and sandals, did ye lack anything? And they said, Nothing" (Luke xxii:35). The Lord who calls His servants and sends them forth always keeps them when they walk in simple dependence upon Himself.

From verses 11 to 15 we read other instructions for this special mission. In city and village they were to inquire for them who are *worthy*. The worthiness consisted undoubtedly in a desire to know Messiah, "waiting for the consolation of Israel." The Gospel of Grace, which is preached now, is preached without any such distinction. Its message is: "Whosoever," even the most unworthy. At the end of this paragraph (verse 15) there is the threatening of judgment when their message is not accepted.

In the next four verses (16-20) we read of how their ministry would be accepted. "Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves; be therefore prudent as the serpents and guileless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to sanhedrims and scourge you in their synagogues." And so they did reject the Lord and the servants He sent. But it was not alone confined to the Jews—sanhedrim and synagogue—but the Gentiles would treat them in the same way. "And ye shall be brought before

rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the nations." Part of the fulfillment of all this is found in the book of Acts. We see here also a deeper meaning and refer to these words again when we come to another verse.

"But when they deliver you up, be not careful how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that hour what ye shall speak. For ye are not the speakers, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." We can point to Stephen in Acts vii as an illustration how fully this promise has been fulfilled.

The most bitter persecution is now promised them by our Lord: "But brother shall deliver up brother to death, and father child; and children shall rise up against parents and shall put them to death; and ye shall be hated of all on account of my name. But he that has endured to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee to the other, for verily I say to you, Ye shall not have completed the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come." These words are perhaps the most important in the whole chapter. They are a kind of key to the entire chapter.

The coming of the Son of Man which is mentioned is His second coming. The giving of the testimony by Jewish disciples concerning the Kingdom of the heavens is according to the words of our Lord to continue till He comes again. How are we to understand this? The testimony which was begun by the apostles up to the time when Israel rejected once more the offers of mercy from the risen Lord, when He was still waiting for their repentance as a nation, is an

unfinished testimony. After that offer was again rejected the great parenthesis, the church age, began, and during this age (which is not reckoned in the Old Testament) there is no more Jewish testimony of the kingdom of the heavens. Israel nationally is set aside, blindness in part is theirs till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. When the church *is* complete and the rapture of the saints has taken place, *then* the Lord begins to deal with His people Israel again. There is the seventieth week of Daniel ix yet to come, and this week of seven years forms the end of this dispensation. In this coming last week of seven years the church testimony is finished and Jewish believers will take up the *unfinished testimony* to the nation and proclaim once more "The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." The xxiv chapter in this Gospel is a continuation of the x chapter, inasmuch as Matthew xxiv shows us the unfinished testimony of the x chapter, finished and completed. (Read Matt. xxiv:5-32.) In Matt. xxiv we read of the great tribulation, so likewise here in the tenth chapter. In Micah vii we read of a dark picture and there the Spirit of Christ reveals a tribulation, which His lips on the earth proclaim to His disciples. Then during the tribulation (*never now*) it will mean enduring to the *end* and *salvation* will come then by the visible return of the Son of Man from heaven. What our Lord said in verses 17 and 18 about persecutions from Jews and Gentiles for these witnesses will find its final great fulfilment in that great tribulation, when not alone the unbelieving nation will persecute the believing and witnessing Jewish remnant, but nations as well.

From the twenty-fourth verse to the end of the chapter our Lord continues to speak to the twelve, who were about to go forth. His words are now words of encouragement, not to fear; they were safe in the hands of His Father. While all these words had a special significance for the Jewish disciples our Lord sent forth, they also contain precious comfort and instruction for every true believer living in this day. It would be extremely one sided to pass over these words of our Lord and treat them as not containing truth for us. Every word which our God and Father has been pleased to give us has a meaning for us.

First of all our Lord speaks of the position of the disciple. "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his Lord. It is sufficient for the disciple that be should become as his teacher, and the bondman as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub,* how much more those of his household?" (verses 24-26). The position of the disciple is then according to these words identification of the closest kind with His Lord. However, to learn fully of this identification with Him, who is our Saviour and Lord, we do not go to this first Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew was not written with this purpose. In the Gospel of John, the Gosepl of Life and Resurrection, and the First Epistle of John as well as the Epistles given by the Holy Spirit through Paul, we learn of the blessed identification which exists by *Grace* between the Lord and His own. How preciously it is revealed by Himself in that

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**Beelzebub* means "Lord of the house," that is, Satan as the possessor of the house.

Holy of Holies in the Gospel of John, the seventeenth chapter. And this chapter itself is but the germ out of which the Holy Spirit develops in the Pauline Epistles, the Gospel of Grace and the truth concerning the Church as the Body of Christ. In that marvelous chapter our Lord intercedes before His Father for the very disciples (as well as ourselves) whom He sent forth in the beginning of His earthly ministry. Altogether one with Him, is the golden thread which goes through His prayer. And He said: "The world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil." In the First Epistle of John the Holy Spirit says: "Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you," and in the upper room He said to His own: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before you" (John xv:18). It is therefore an identification of the closest nature in which we stand with our Lord. And do we ever stop and think on these things? How little we do, how little all this is *real* to us? It is true little of the reproach of Christ is seen in these days; but little hatred from the side of the world, nor any names of rejection. We ask why? The answer is soon given. The professing church has turned her back upon her heavenly calling and with that upon the Lord. She has committed adultery in loving the world and has returned to the beggarly elements of this world. But let the true believer leave this camp and go outside of that which *professes* His name and soon enough the reproach will have to be borne.

Christendom and the world has little use for one who walks in true separation. Still how precious is that place. If it is reproach it is *His* reproach; hatred, it is the same with which He was hated. Reproach, hatred and persecution is the seal of identification and fellowship with Him.

But with this our Lord does not leave it. He comforts those He sent forth. And now He speaks the word which is to calm their fears: "Fear not." What meaning it has coming from such lips! Angels spoke the word "Fear not" in olden times. They are but creatures sent with a message from the Throne. But He who speaks here is the Creator Himself made a little lower than the angels He had created; the Omnipotent One, our Lord speaks, "Fear not!" "Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, and secret which shall not be known. What I say to you in darkness speak in the light, and what ye hear in the ear preach upon the houses." In other words, He tells them of the day when all is to be uncovered, and the secret things to be made known. This fact is ever to be before them. It is to be daily before us. Oh, brethren, let us learn to look at *all* things in the light of the Judgment seat! "Do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord shall come, who shall also bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts; and *then* shall each have his praise from God" (1 Corinth. iv:5). In view of this revelation of the secret things our Lord tells us to be bold and to declare the whole counsel of God.

Then what harm can men do to him anyway, who is

Christ's (and Christ is God's). We belong to God, we are His own. No man can do us any harm with his persecution or hatred. Therefore He says now: "And be not afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." What if they should even go so far as to kill the body, as they often did and will yet do, especially to the Jewish Saints in the great tribulation.* If they kill the body they cannot kill the soul and the killing of the body and faithful testimony given through martyrdom will enrich the Lord as well as the disciple. We may not be called upon to surrender thus our bodies, yet the principle of it is ours; fear nothing outward, nothing temporal, whatever it may be. "But fear rather Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."† And He who is able to do that and will do it at the great white Throne to the unsaved, is God. He then is to be feared alone. Of course all this is not to be read as referring to the believer. He who has believed is passed from death unto life, he does not come into judgment. Once saved means always saved. We must, however, not overlook the fact that among the twelve there was one who was not saved. It was the first warning coming to Judas. He looked to outward things and was a thief.

Words of comfort come next. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the

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*We mention again that all these words have a future meaning and fulfillment during that time of Jacob's trouble, after the removal of the church. The Jewish believers will know the comfort of these words, as Saints during this age know them.

†Here *Gehenna* and not Hades. Gehenna is correctly translated hell.

ground without your Father; but of *you* even the hairs of the head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; *ye* are better than many sparrows." And where is the child of God who does not rejoice in such a statement? He knows the sparrows upon the housetops as He knew the fish in the sea and the piece of money, which laid on the bottom of the sea. He knows every hair of His own. He speaks of a special providence which watches over every child of God. Happy are we if we walk in the simplicity of a child before our Father and our Lord and ever know by day and by night "He careth for you." We are all in His hands.

The words of responsibility follow: "Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, I also will confess before my Father who is in the Heavens. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in the Heavens."

He who believes in the name of the Lord Jesus is saved; confession with the mouth follows (Rom. x:8-12).

Every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and confesses with the mouth that Jesus is Lord, such confesses Him before men. This confession of Him is ever to increase not only with the lips but in the conduct and the life. Thus every true believer is a confessor of Jesus as Lord and the Lord in His day will confess him before His Father. Individual faithfulness will of course bring a corresponding reward. The *unsaved* denies Him before men. He may have the name of Jesus upon his lips but he trusts not in Him and this is the denial and he who has not be-

lieved will not be confessed before the Father, because the unsaved is none of His.

In the few verses which follow (34-36 verses) our Lord describes the characteristics of this age, the age in which we live and which is so rapidly ending up. "Do not think that I have come to send peace upon the earth. I have not come to send peace, but a sword." Many puzzled Jews have come to us with this word and asked what Jesus of Nazareth meant. How could He be our Messiah when instead "of peace He sends the sword?" "Is not Messiah the Prince of Peace to speak peace to the nations?" However we learn that the words He speaks here, foretelling the history of this age, are blessed evidences of His divinity. This age is not the age of world wide peace. "Peace on Earth" is not yet reached in the divine program for the earth. The King and His kingdom rejected, He Himself absent, strife, confusion and wars, the sword reigns. But the King is coming back. Before His return as King out of the opened heavens the sword will be unsheathed and peace be taken from the earth. The nations may boast of peace among themselves at this time, but it will not last very long and soon the rider upon the red horse will gallop over the earth (Revel. vi). Peace like a river will surely flow after the King has come and all swords have become plowshares. The Lord hasten the day.

And what place and position has the true disciple with Christ in this age? Christ is rejected and scorned. He Himself is to be owned and full devotedness shown to Him, and that means—suffering.

"He who loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it; he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it."

But there is another side. Not alone the suffering but the glory which is to follow. The recompense is as sure as the suffering and the recompense will be greater than the sufferings.

"He that receives you, receives me, and he that receives me, receives Him who has sent me. He that receives a prophet in a prophet's name shall receive a prophet's reward; he that receives a righteous man in a righteous man's name shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily he shall in no wise lose his reward." The one who receives a prophet shall have the blessing of a prophet—he who receives the Son of God becomes the Son of God, Heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ, and anything done, which has love for its motive, will not be forgotten.

CHAPTER XI.

The first verse of this chapter belongs to the sending forth of the twelve, and should be put to the previous chapter. "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and preach in their cities." He took the work upon Himself once more, and with the disciples He had sent forth He preached the Kingdom of the Heavens to be at hand. The Lord of the harvest, who had sent forth the laborers, enters the harvestfield Himself. His rejection is now to be made more and more manifest. He came to His own and His own received Him not. Gradually in this Gospel we have seen how Israel had no heart, no desire for Him; they were indeed blinded. The rejection of Him who had so fully shown Himself to be Jehovah manifested in the flesh, is now rapidly approaching. Soon He will leave the house and take His place at the seashore (chapter xiii:1) to teach the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens, that which is to pass, while He, the King, and with Him the Kingdom is rejected. The eleventh chapter is the beginning of the crisis, and the twelfth chapter is the great turning point.

First of all we have the record of John the Baptist in prison sending to our Lord, and the message our Lord sends to him. "But John, having heard in the prison the works of the Christ, sent by His disciples and said to Him,

Art Thou the Coming One? or are we to wait for another? And Jesus answering said to them, Go, report to John what you hear and see. Blind men see and lame walk; lepers are cleansed and deaf hear; and dead are raised and poor have glad tidings preached to them; and blessed is whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

The incident has been differently interpreted. From the fourth chapter we learned that when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison He departed into Galilee (iv:12). The fourteenth chapter in this Gospel gives the story of John's imprisonment and his death. In this arrangement the divine hand which guided Matthew's hand is seen again.

John the Baptist spent therefore some time in prison before he sent his disciples to our Lord. It is generally assumed that John, the preacher of repentance and the coming Kingdom, had finally expected that Jesus would soon establish the Kingdom, and that he, as the voice in the wilderness, the forerunner, would have a share in its glories. Instead of this expected glory he is cast into a dungeon. He had faithfully discharged his duties. Not like a miserable hireling had he acted, but fearlessly he had denounced evil, and for all his faithfulness nothing but suffering, rejection and death staring him in the face. It is, therefore, said by many that he doubted that Jesus was truly the promised Messiah, and asked for evidences of His Messiahship. However, this interpretation can hardly be right. If we turn to the Gospel of John and read his utterances there, we find that he had a complete insight into the work which Christ as the Lamb of God was to do, and he *knew* Jesus was *the*

Christ. It is also reasonable to assume that his own disciples who had come to our Lord with the question, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast but Thy disciples fast not?" had come to him and given him the answer, that the bridegroom, the Messiah, was to be taken away from them, and then there would be fasting.

Others have looked upon this incident in another light. They attempt to shield John the Baptist altogether, and defend his absolute faith and confidence in Jesus as the Christ. According to many John was perfect so that no doubt could assail his mind. But why should he send from his prison and ask of the Lord such information? The difficulty is, according to these, solved, in that John desired the answer not for any confirmation of his faith, but that he sent his disciples because they were staggered in their belief. Martin Luther says on this passage: "It is certain that John sent to inquire on account of his disciples; for *they* did not yet regard Christ as the One for Whom He was to be regarded. They waited for one who would move along pompously, highly learned, as a mighty King. John treats them tenderly, endures their weak faith till they become strong; does not reject them because they do not yet believe in Him so firmly." This solution of the difficulty, however, lacks scriptural support. It is a fanciful theory that John should have sent to Christ for the sake of his disciples. We need not claim perfection and infallibility for John the Baptist, for he had neither. Only one on the earth was perfect and infallible, sinless and spotless, who was never assailed by doubt, and that one is our Lord Jesus Christ. John, like

Elijah, was "a man of like passions as we are." Elijah's ministry was marked with individual failure. His life was threatened by Jezebel: "And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings xix: 3, 4). What a failure this was! Surely there is nothing good in man, and even in the most privileged servants of the Lord there is the flesh and the failure of the flesh. John in prison passes through the experience of Elijah in whose spirit and power he had come. It would be incorrect to say that John doubted the Messiahship of Jesus. He knew Him as the Christ. Yet in prison his patience is severely tested, and doubt troubles him. In this test he looks to Him, whom he always honored as his Lord, for succor. He sent directly to the Lord, and certainly He knew the weak and doubting one, as well as his faith, which looked to Him for strength and a word of cheer.

And is this not an incident with lessons for us? It teacheth us to confess our weakness before Him, and look to the Lord for the strength and comfort He alone can give.

We may also meditate in connection with John in prison and his doubt with another servant of the Lord in prison. There in Rome he sat and wrote, "I, Paul, prisoner of the Lord." And out of that prison came forth the strains of praise and joy. How many "ifs' and "hows" and "whys"

he might have asked? How many murmurings and bitter complaints might have flown from His lips? He sends out a letter from the dungeon which has not the slightest hint of failure in it, where sin and flesh is not seen and not mentioned. But what is the secret of the rejoicing prisoner of the Lord? What is the secret which underlies the triumphant language of joy in the Epistle to the Philippians? It is one word, "Christ." The life of Christ in him, and Christ the center, Christ the pattern and object before the apostle, and Christ his strength, enabled by Him to do all things, is the secret of all; and that John the Baptist, the greatest of the Old Testament did not know, nor could he be in possession of it. It is our full inheritance as believers on the other side of the cross. Oh, may we live in enjoyment of it, up to the mark of our position and possession in Christ.

But we return to our chapter. The Lord gives the message for John. If his disciples had any doubt, the words of the Lord must have dispersed these. And when John heard the answer it must have brought him strength and cheer. The Lord speaks of the signs of the Kingdom which He did in fulfillment of Old Testament predictions. We have shown before how in the miracles our Lord performed Is. xxxv:5 and 6 was fulfilled. The dead also were raised and the glad tidings preached. The spiritual significance of the latter two is of course fully seen in the Gospel of John. The words, "And blessed is whosoever shall not be offended in Me," are words of exhortation to John the Baptist. How like the Lord to put them at the *end* of the message. The Holy Spirit has repeated this in the Epistles where the ad-

monitions are always coming in at the end or after words of love and commendation were given first. The admonition was certainly understood by John, and how deeply it must have exercised him. It led to humiliation, heartsearching, and in the end it was a beatitude, a "blessed." May it ever be so with us.

And all this was not unknown to the crowds. They stood there and heard what passed between the Lord and John's disciples. They heard the question they asked and the answer our Lord sent to John. John the Baptist was known by these crowds and they believed in him as a great prophet. His testimony and his personality might then be discredited by them. The Lord addresses himself to the crowds in what may be termed a defense of John. He shields him now before any criticism, and maintains his testimony and divinely given mission.

"But as they went away Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John, What went ye out in the wilderness to see? A reed moved about by the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in delicate raiment? Behold those who wear delicate things are in the houses of kings. But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet; this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say to you, that there is not risen among the born of women a greater than John the Baptist. But he who is a little one in the Kingdom of the Heavens is greater than he."

We confine our remarks to the end sentence. What is

the meaning of it? Its common application is generally the thought that our Lord speaks here of the church age, and that the least in this present dispensation is greater than John in the old dispensation, to which he fully belonged. That such is the case no one doubts. We as Christian believers are higher in our standing than the Old Testament saints. However, the primary meaning of the passage is a different one. The question would be first of all, "What does our Lord mean here by Kingdom of the Heavens?" Up to the thirteenth chapter in the Gospel of Matthew the phrase, "Kingdom of the Heavens," has only one meaning, viz., the Kingdom to be established in the earth, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets. In the thirteenth chapter it is the Kingdom of the Heavens in the hands of man in its development during the absence of the King. We cannot think, therefore, that in the eleventh chapter, where it is still the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens, our Lord would introduce the present age. This would be all out of keeping with the scope of Matthew. Now as our Lord means the Kingdom of the Heavens actually set up in the earth, the meaning of His words becomes clear. The little one who *is* in that Kingdom of the Heavens, when it has come at last, will be greater than John, who but announced the Kingdom to come. It foreshadows the glories of the coming Kingdom age, when the little one will be greater than John ever could be in the earth.

But our Lord adds: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is taken by violence, and the violent seize on it. For all the prophets and the law

have prophesied unto John. And if ye will receive it (him), this is Elias, who is to come. He that has ears to hear let him hear."

These words are again very simple and to our mind present no difficulty at all, if they are taken in their literal meaning. It is strange that the words of our Lord should be made to mean the Gospel, eternal life, conversion and the sinner's own efforts to take possession of it. Yet such is the case. Many preachers and evangelists have no other light on this passage and preach and exhort from it what is in direct opposition to the blessed Gospel. According to these preachers, the violent, who take the Kingdom by force or press into it (Luke xvi:16), are unsaved sinners. The devil, the flesh and the world stand in the sinner's way of salvation, so they teach, and he must use force, great violence, to enter into the Kingdom. After due exercise, strenuous effort and violence he will be able to take it by force. This is the general interpretation of the passage. It is as erroneous as the interpretation of the parable of the treasure hid in the field and the pearl of great price, which makes the sinner give his all (though he has *nothing* to give) to buy salvation.

No, the violent who take the Kingdom by violence are *not* unsaved sinners, who seek salvation and that salvation must be taken by force. Salvation is by grace, it is God's free gift, and the sinner is not saved through and in his violent efforts, but *in* believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees and scribes who stand here before our Lord are the violent who take the Kingdom of the Heavens (never the Gospel) by force and seize on it. Our Lord says:

"From the days of John until *now*." The forerunner, John, was violently rejected by the Pharisees. This foreshadowed the rejection of the King, the rejection of the preaching of the Kingdom and the Kingdom itself. In this seizing upon the Kingdom, rejecting it, the Kingdom of the Heavens suffered violence. It was rejected by force and now is postponed till He comes again. If they had received John the Baptist he would have been Elias. But he was rejected, they would not have it so. They did violence to what the King had come to bring. Another Elias will come once more, and then no violence can keep back the coming of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Let us notice that John's ministry was *exclusively* to his own people. Elijah's ministry is still future and falls in the period of the great tribulation. His ministry and testimony will be confined to the land of Israel and to the remnant of Israel. Any one who claims to be Elijah incarnate at this time is either a downright fraud, unbalanced in his mind, or so grossly ignorant of the Word of God and His revealed purposes, that the proud imaginations of his heart lead him astray into such a ridiculous claim.

The words which follow are a true description of the generation which was privileged to see the King, Jehovah, manifested in the earth. "But to whom shall I liken this generation? It is like children calling to their companions, saying, We have piped to you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wailed. For John has come, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a demon. The son of man has come eating and drinking,

and they say, Behold a man that is eating and wine drinking, a friend of tax-gatherers, and of sinners;—and wisdom has been justified by her children" (verses 15-19). In other words, the generation was a foolish lot of people who could not be suited by anything. They were like children. It is a wonderful declaration of our Lord of the condition of the people, His own to whom He came, and who received Him not. The illustration is taken from children playing with the real things of life, with joy and sorrow, and idling their time away. John appeared among them and they were dissatisfied with him. He was too strict, too severe; they cared not for him, and because he would not sit down and eat and drink with them they said, he has a demon. Then the Lord came. Truth and mercy were revealed through Him. He sat down with the tax-gatherers and sinners and mingled with them, eating and drinking. Divine mercy towards the fallen and outcast was most blessedly shown—the spotless One in touch with the defiled and lost, calling sinners to repentance. But they had no understanding for this, no heart for that wonderful grace. He was in their eyes but a man, for they said: "Behold *a* man—eating and drinking." They put Him on the same level with the wine drinking company. Neither mourning nor rejoicing suited them. Behind it stands the evil heart, the natural man, never pleased with God's way, always finding fault. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii:7). The words "wisdom has been justified by her children" has found many different interpretations. Its meaning is very

simple. While the large mass of people were thus rejecting John and Christ, and had no understanding for God's love and mercy made known, there were others, a few indeed, and these accepted the teaching of John and believed in the Lord. "Wisdom" is an Old Testament name of our Lord. The whole book of Proverbs abounds with the word Wisdom and the speech Wisdom utters. The eighth chapter tells us that Wisdom is a person and that person is our Lord. Those who believed in Him are the children of Wisdom and they had no fault to find, neither with John's burning call to repentance, nor with the mercy of Christ in eating and drinking with the tax-gatherers and sinners. In this way Wisdom was justified by her children.

And is the present generation of nominal Christian better than the generation of professing Israelites in the day of Christ? We think not. They are to-day the same as the Christ rejecting Jews were then. The Christ of God, God's way of Righteousness and Grace does not suit the natural heart at any time.

Solemn are the words which follow now. The Judge speaks. He who speaks here will take His place upon the throne and preside in that judgment day of which He speaks, "Then began He to reproach the cities in which most of His works of power had taken place, because they had not repented. Woe to thee, Chorazin! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! for if the works of power which have taken place in you, had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they had long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in judgment day than for

you. And thou, Capernaum, who hast been raised up to heaven, shall be brought down even to Hades. For if the works of power which have taken place in thee, had taken place in Sodom, it had remained until this day. But I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in judgment day than for thee." His divine patience is now seen as almost exhausted and for the first time in this Gospel He speaks the "Woe," which He repeats later a number of times. And oh! the word "woe" coming from such lips! Chorazin and Bethsaida had been greatly privileged. Works of power, works which manifested Jehovah's presence had been shown in their midst, yet they repented not. Tyre and Sidon never witnessed such manifestations. The responsibility of Chorazin and Bethsaida is therefore greater than the responsibility of Tyre and Sidon. There will be in that day different degrees of punishment. Capernaum, His own city, had come nearest to heaven and still there was no response. Sodom with all their awful fruits of the flesh will fare better in judgment day than Capernaum. The measure of relationship is always the measure of responsibility. Tyre, Sidon and Sodom had no such privileges and stood in no such relationship to the Lord as the cities which our Lord mentions here. It is so with Christendom to-day. It shall be more tolerable in that day to the nations of darkest Africa than to the so-called "Christian nations," with light and privileges offered and wilfully rejected.

And what a scene follows! "At that time," when in the midst of the outburst of His righteous words of condemnation, He speaks the words so precious still. What words

could picture Him as He stood there and that face, soon to be marred and spit upon, turned upward to heaven? And now He said, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father, nor does anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal Him."

The Lord stands on the earth and looks to the Father in heaven. Both are Lord. It was so at the destruction of Sodom. "Then the *Lord* rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the Lord* out of heaven." (Genes. xix:24). The Lord who had then been in the earth and communed with Abraham His friend, stood once more on the earth. He came in the form of a servant, having emptied Himself of His outward glory, and here as the obedient One praises Him, to whom He had said coming into the world, "Lo, I come to do Thy will" (Heb. x:4-7). The Lord of the heaven and of the earth is His Father, but He who looks now to Him is not less the Lord of the heaven and of the earth. "Father," He said. He was then the only One who could thus look to heaven. It is, blessed be His name! different now. The Spirit of Sonship has been given whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

From the wise and the prudent, the self-sufficient religionists, the Pharisees and speculating Sadducees these things were hid, but revealed unto babes. They had refused Him,

the wisdom of God; being wise in their own conceits and blindness was the dreadful result. Babes instead received the revelation of Himself. We often wonder why the wise and prudent of our day do not see certain truths, the blessed Gospel of the Glory of God, the truth concerning the church, the coming of our Lord, while others, poor and weak though they are, are in full possession of these revelations and ever receive more out of his fullness. The reason is soon found. Only He who owns his nothingness, who takes his place in weakness at His feet, and is like a babe, can receive these things. Never does the Lord entrust His secrets and his councils to the wise and prudent. Would we know more of Him, of His Word, His purposes and His thoughts? There is only one way—be a babe, own yourself as such and as a babe walk and live before the Lord of heaven and earth.

"*All* things," our Lord said, "have been delivered unto me by my Father." The people were soon ready to reject Him as their Messiah and King, but He knew His inheritance, an inheritance in which the babe in Him has a glorious share.

Furthermore, "the Father knoweth the Son." How softly we should tread whenever we speak of the person of our Lord, for the full knowledge is only with the Father. "No one knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whomsoever the Son may be pleased to reveal Him." No one cometh to the Father but by me. Whoever denies the Son has not the Father either. Revealing the Father is what our Lord did and still is doing. In resurrection He is Son of God

with power, and all who receive Him are brought to God and become children of God, to know the Father.

Upon this divine statement of His own person, His oneness with the Father, He utters that word which is so well known and which has been a word of blessing to uncountable souls.

"Come to Me all ye who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest." This is the first part of the gracious invitation. Significantly it comes in right after the rejection by His own becomes manifest and after He spoke of the rejection of the favored Galilean cities. It is typical of that full, free and blessed Gospel of Grace, which was made known after His death and resurrection, and which is still being preached.

It is an invitation to *all,* Jew and Gentile. The invitation is to those who labor and are burdened; it is to come to *Him* and He promises rest. How full it is! How inexhaustible in its meaning! The second part of His invitation brings us further. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls; for My yoke is easy and My burden light."

The one who has come to Him and found rest is to take now His yoke upon him and to learn of Him. It means to follow Him, to be under Him as Lord. The yoke is not the law, but His own yoke, His loving restraint; and two belong into the yoke; we are yoked together with Him. And having Him, the One meek and lowly in heart, ever before the

soul, rest for the soul is the blessed fruit. It is the whole Epistle to the Philippians in a nutshell. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." Coming to Him we have rest—living in Him we find rest for our souls. May the reader meditate upon these words of our Lord till they become sweeter than honey and honeycomb.

CHAPTER XII.

The twelfth chapter brings before us the full manifestation of the enmity of Israel against our Lord and His rejection by His own.

It is the great turning point in this Gospel and with it the offer of our Lord to Israel as their King, as well as the offer of the Kingdom ceases. We have followed the story of our Lord manifesting Himself as Jehovah the King. Everything in the first part of this royal Gospel proves Him to be the promised One. Speaking not like the Pharisees and the Scribes, but with authority, He had declared the principles of the Kingdom He came to bring.

Going through the cities of Galilee, He and His disciples had preached the Kingdom of the Heavens to be at hand. Multitudes had heard the glad and solemn announcement.

These glad tidings were backed up by the most startling signs. The blind saw, the lepers were cleansed, demons were driven out and the dead were raised. There could be only one explanation for these miracles.

Every one of them proved conclusively that Jehovah had visited His people; He whose name is "Immanuel" had appeared in their midst. Old Testament predictions of the coming of the Messiah, the manner of His coming and His works were being fulfilled before the eyes of that generation yet they did not and would not recognize Him.

They remained cold and indifferent. They had no heart for Jehovah-Jesus. This in itself was a fulfillment of prophecy. And so we learn in the eighth chapter that a Gentile showed greater faith than the Lord had found in Israel and our Lord indicates the immediate future of the children of the Kingdom. They were to be cast out and others from the East and the West were to come and sit down in the Kingdom of the Heavens with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The murmuring of the Pharisees, first heard when he healed the paralytic and forgave him his sins, was the first outbreak against Him. And now the storm we saw in its threatening is to break. The awful blasphemy is uttered and the King declares in His sovereign power the relationship between Him the King and the Kingdom people broken. It is now clear that the Kingdom of the Heavens, so fully revealed in the Old Testament, is to be postponed till the Son of Man comes again. After this rejection of the King and His turning away from His own, He revealed the Kingdom of the Heavens in mysteries. He shows, as the Revealer of Secrets, the history of what He brings and makes known, the Kingdom in the hands of men and the development of it during His absence from the earth. And so we read immediately following the xii chapter, "And that *same day* Jesus went out from the house and sat down by the sea." He left the house; breaking off His relationship and taking His place by the sea—(a type of the Gentiles).

And now we are ready to look a little closer at the sad events before us in the important twelfth chapter.

The first paragraph, contained in eight verses, shows us

our Lord manifesting Himself as Lord of the Sabbath and answering the charge of the Pharisees, who accused them of Sabbath breaking. "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the cornfields; and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck the ears and to eat. But the Pharisees, seeing it, said to Him, Behold, Thy disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." It was "at that time," at the time of that loving call to come unto Him, which stands at the close of the eleventh chapter. When divine love was full of solicitude for the burdened and the poor, the evil hearts of the enemies were ready to attack Him.

The Sabbath, the *seventh* day, is something essentially Jewish, the peculiar day for the peculiar people. Its keeping is embodied in the ten commandments. The seventh day was, and is to the present day, a matter of great importance with the Jew. He prides himself with it and boasts in the strict keeping of it. Not satisfied with the plain fourth commandment in the decalogue, the Jewish elders added their injunctions forbidding even the smallest matters and entering into details which are ridiculous. These human traditions were in the days of our Lord strictly followed. The religious Pharisee saw to its enforcement and they put these burdens upon the people and tried to establish their own righteousness. To take ears of corn and eat them on the Sabbath is nowhere forbidden in the law given through Moses. Among many other injunctions the leaders of traditions had added this to the Word of God and made it a sin should anyone pluck an ear of corn on the seventh day.

Before we continue with the story of this chapter we

desire to add here a few words, which may prove helpful to some of our readers. Not a few Christian believers have been annoyed, as well as disturbed, by a class of professing Christians who have added to their denominational names, as a special distinction, the term "Seventh day." Thus we find about us "Seventh Day Baptists" and "Seventh Day Adventists," as well as others whose chief endeavor seems to be to preach the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath. These sects, who defend the seventh day as a Christian institution, are nearly all infested with other serious evil doctrines, such as soul sleep, second probation, universalism and others. The root of this error of Sabbath keeping is the ignorance of these people of the fact that the believer in Christ has not the law, the ten commandments, for his rule, but the believer in Christ is dead to the law, and as a new creation is completely severed from that which is old, as well as from all earthly connections. The believer in Christ is above the law. He is complete and perfect in Christ. The rule for his walk is Christ Himself, by whom he is indwelt. The Sabbath, the seventh day, is connected with the earth and with Israel, but the believer is not Israel, nor does he belong to the earth, but Grace has lifted him into heaven. It is quite true there is a Sabbath day and this day is the seventh day of the week. But there is no Sabbath keeping now as regards Israel and the earth. The great and true Sabbath is still coming.

The question might then be asked, "Has the Christian believer no Sabbath day to keep?" The answer is, *No*. If we speak of a Sabbath day then surely it must mean the seventh day, and if we desire to keep the Sabbath day holy we must

keep not the first day of the week but the seventh day. But some will say, "the Sabbath has been changed from the last day of the week to the first day." This is often said; but there's no scriptural authority for it. Neither Christ nor His apostles declared such a change. It is, therefore, wrong to call the first day of the week, known by the name "Sunday," the Sabbath or "*Christian* Sabbath." The first day of the week is the Lord's day, the day of resurrection, the day of the new creation. This day was kept in the very beginning of the Christian age as a precious memorial of Him who was dead and was raised from the dead, who is seated in the Highest Heaven and who is coming again. It was with the early Christians, and should be so still, a day of worship, when they came together to break bread and partake of the blessed cup, to show the Lord's death, till He come again. Some one has expressed it in the following short sentences: "Israel was *commanded* to observe the Sabbath day; the church is *privileged* to enjoy the first day of the week. The former was the *test* of Israel's moral condition; the latter is the significant *proof* of the Church's eternal acceptance. The Sabbath day manifested what Israel *could* do for God; the Lord's day perfectly declares what God *has done* for us."

There is no law about this blessed first day of the week. The Christian believer is in perfect liberty, with no yoke and bondage upon him. "For ye have been called to liberty, brethren; only do not turn liberty into an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. v:15). The child of God will know how to use this liberty in the right

way and will certainly have the first day of the week as a day of rejoicing in the Lord and fellowship with Him.

A strange sight indeed it is to see the nominal church attempting by political influences, legislation, police activities, to force the *world* to keep the Sabbath day on the first day of the week. As if it were the calling of the church to enforce *laws* and as if the world could be made to keep the Sabbath. What a deplorable mixture! What an awful confusion!

And now after this disgression we come back to our chapter. The human way of answering the objections of the Pharisees would have been to tell them that there was no law forbidding the deed done by the disciples. In a few words He might have informed them not alone of the invalidity of their traditions, but also of the sin they had committed by adding to the Word of God. However, this is not the way divine wisdom chooses to silence their accusations. Perhaps they expected in their Satanic device some such answer, which they would have used against Him. The answer they hear from His lips, the lips of the Lawgiver Himself, is a different one they expected. It reveals His divinity, Him the perfect one in knowledge, as does every other answer He gave to His enemies in this Gospel, silencing their temptings at every instance. When He met Satan, as we learned from the fourth chapter, He used as weapon the Word of God, His own Word. Now He meets the offspring of vipers, the children of the enemy, and the weapon He uses is the same. He wields once more the Sword of the Spirit and answers their unscriptural objections by His scriptural

assertions. May we learn from it, and at all times, whether it is the Devil or his offspring which tempt us, use the Word in our defense. And thus He spake: "Have ye not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were hungry? How he entered into the house of God, and ate the shewbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests only? Or have ye not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? But I say unto you, that there is here what is greater than the temple. But if ye had known what is: I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

The incident quoted by our Lord from David's life we find recorded in 1 Sam. xxi: How then is this incident to be applied? David was forced, as the rejected one, though God's anointed king, to enter the house of God and do what was not lawful for him to do. David's hunger and the hunger of those who were with him is but a type of the greater One than David and His disciples passing through the cornfield hungry and obliged to pluck ears of corn to eat. The sad scene on that Sabbath day was evidence enough that the people did not care for the little group headed by the King. When David was rejected and a fugitive, the holy things connected with the ceremonials given to Israel by God ceased to be holy. The sin was David's rejection, and this made the consecrated shewbread common, as David said to the High Priest, "the bread is, as it were common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel" (1 Sam. xxi:5).

The rejection of God's anointed had profaned all. This is the thought our Lord expressed to the Pharisees. They had rejected Him. They had no love for Him nor cared for Him. How ridiculous for these hyprocrites to speak of Sabbath-keeping when they were rejecting the Lord of the Sabbath! They were straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. How much of this pharisaical, hypocritical spirit we have about us in Christendom. The divinity of the Bible, as well as the Lord and His redemption work, is denied by many professing Christians, who hold still outward forms, rituals, keeping of holidays and ceremonials. But even the priests profaned the Sabbath and were blameless. What did our Lord mean by this? The priests had to bring sacrifices on the Sabbath day. "And on the Sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two-tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof"—thus the law commanded (Num. xxviii:9). This demanded work, and according to the law and their interpretation of it, it was forbidden on the Sabbath, yet the priests, though they profaned the Sabbath, were held blameless. Grace was fully typified in these sacrifices and Grace working is above the law and does away with the legal covenant. Our Lord surely indicates here the time when laws and ceremonials were to find their end in Him who is "greater than the temple." He had come as the true priest and the true sacrifice to do that which the blood of bulls and goats could never do; that is, to take away sin and bring the Sabbath, the rest. He is the Lord of the Sabbath and that

as Son of Man, in His humiliation and in His exaltation. But alas! they would not understand Him nor know what it meant, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." There was no answer from the Pharisees. The declaration of Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath, the One who is above the Sabbath, must have inflamed the hatred in their hearts still more. And so we see Him going away from thence. However, He did not turn His back upon them. It is a lingering, patient love we learn of Him here. He turns His blessed feet towards their synagogue. How reluctant to leave them in their dreadful condition of enmity against Him!

A man is present with a withered hand. They desire now to find some new ground of accusation again Him. Their first attempt had failed. He had read their evil thoughts, and by His answer He had shown that He anticipated the question they now put to Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Awful motive, which stands alongside of the question, showing the depths of Satan "that they might accuse Him." The question also discloses the fact that they believed in His healing power. We may well imagine the scene in that synagogue. The Lord in His divine calmness, the unfortunate man with the withered hand, the malicious, accusing Pharisees with their Satanic desire. And now the stillness broken by His voice, "What man shall there be of you who has one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and raise it up?" There was no answer; of course none could stand up and declare he would not deliver his one sheep out of the pit. "How much better then is a man than a sheep! So that it is lawful to do well on the

Sabbath." What a divine logic! How unanswerable this statement!

But it is not His Word alone. He has divine power to heal him who has heard His words. His glory as Jehovah, the King Immanuel, is to shine forth once more. He says to the man, "Stretch out thy hand!" Faith answers to His Word, and he stretcheth it out, and it was restored sound as the other. It was faith to stretch out a withered hand in answer to His Word and precious are the lessons we may learn from it for the life by faith to which we are called, ever living and acting in obedience to His Word. Yet we pass over that which is so plainly seen on the surface and add but a few words of what this miracle stands for in this dispensational Gospel. The man with the withered hand is a type of poor, withered Israel, withered spiritually and nationally. He had come to restore, but, unlike the man, Israel had no faith. Yet the day is coming when Israel will answer in faith and healing will follow.

The Pharisees beaten by His words and deed go out of the synagogue. In their dark councils for the first time they came together to find a way how to destroy Him.

How great the blindness which began to settle upon them! How could they destroy Him, who had raised the dead? How could they take His life, who is the true God and the eternal life? And even if there and then, in their dark counsels, they had found a way, according to their conception, to destroy Him, they could never have touched His life, for our Lord's body was not subject to mortality, His body in His humiliation was immortal, for He knew no sin. And

while they kept their blind endeavors to themselves, He was not ignorant of it. "But Jesus, knowing it, withdrew thence, and great crowds followed Him and He healed them all and charged them strictly that they should not make Him publicly known" (verses 15, 16). The withdrawal of Himself from the scene and the presence of the Pharisees indicated His withdrawal from the nation itself, the result of His rejection.

This is made clear by the quotation from the Scriptures which follows: "That that might be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul has found its delight. I will put my Spirit upon Him, and He shall show forth judgment to the nations. He shall not strive or cry out, nor shall anyone hear His voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, until He bringeth forth judgment unto victory; and in His name shall the nations hope" (verses 17-21). These verses are found in Isaiah xlii:1-4. He who knew the Scriptures and who had come to fulfill the prophecies relating to His sufferings, whose constant desire was to do the will of Him who sent Him, that the Scripture might be fulfilled—what comfort and encouragement must have come to Him through these words, which His own Spirit had revealed to Isaiah. The rejection of Him by His own was imminent. They were turning away from Him and accusing Him, but He knew Himself as the chosen One, the Beloved, His Father's love and delight upon Him. Thus in the midst of the enemies with their wicked accusations

and persecutions He could be calm, His perfect trust in Him, whose Beloved He was, well pleasing to Him.

Our way, as His own, should not be different from this. In the midst of tribulations and adversities, surrounded by the enemy, we can be calm, and more than that, rejoice.

He, as the servant of Jehovah, did not strive. Why should He strive as the One who put His trust in Jehovah? And thus it is written of the servant, His follower, "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all." (2 Tim. ii:24.) Gentleness as foretold was to be found in Him. How gentle and loving He must have been? Can we ever think too much of His patience and gentleness? The bruised reed He did not break. The weakest thing He took tenderly in His hands. The smoking flax was not quenched by Him. In the Epistle of our practical walk in Christ we are exhorted, "let your gentleness be known of all men." (Phil. iv:5). He in us will reproduce the very same characteristic in our lives here on the earth.

But the force of the quotation lies in the fact that the Gentiles, the nations are mentioned. The fulfillment in its completeness will take place, no doubt, at the time of His second Coming, but here the Holy Spirit uses it in still another way. Israel had begun to reject Him and now the Gentiles shall hear of God's gift and grace. The passage is introduced by the Spirit of God in a way as He only could do it.

Another one possessed by a demon is brought before Him. Most likely He had returned from the withdrawal recorded above, and once more the Pharisees are present. The pos-

sessed one is blind and dumb. Was he not a perfect picture of the nation Israel? Blind and dumb was their condition. Again He manifests Himself as Lord and He healed the demon possessed man, so that the dumb spoke and saw. No wonder that all the crowds were amazed and said, "Is this the Son of David?" They must have meant by this cry the Messiah, for they expected Him under the title of the Son of David. Still the question also implies doubt.

And here they stand again, these dark and cunning Pharisees. They have heard it. Perhaps the cry, "Is this the Son of David?" reached their ear. Moved with jealousy, anger, malice and Satanic hatred against Him whose omnipotent power was once more manifested, they said: "This man does not cast out demons but by Beelzebub, prince of demons."

The accusation had been made before by them (ix:34) when it was passed over by the Lord, but now, after the repeated manifestations of His power, after their hatred culminated in seeking His life, the awful blasphemy is to be rebuked by Him. Cowards they were, as it is seen that they did not dare to bring the accusation to His face. How could they dare to stand before Him? So He reads again their very thoughts, a miracle in itself, which should have startled them. His answer to their Satanic thoughts consists in two very logical arguments. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not subsist. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself, how then shall his kingdom subsist?" (verses 25-26). This is very clear. Satan casting out Satan would mean a division in his awful domain,

which would mean its complete ruin and overthrow. It is, therefore, inconceivable that the Devil could furnish the power to destroy his own kingdom which he controls. The passage is full of meaning aside from the argument it contains. He who knoweth all things in perfect knowledge tells us that Satan is a *person* and a king, for he has a kingdom over which he rules. The demons* are in his kingdom, one with the head in thought and purpose. How little we know of his awful power, of his kingdom and the agencies at his command to destroy body and soul. We need not know it all, it is sufficient to know that he is an enemy overcome, his kingdom is spoiled by the victor, by Him who has annulled him, who has the power of death, that is the Devil. Higher Criticism claims that our Lord acquiesced in the legendary belief of the Jews, a belief they had picked up in Babylon, that there existed a personal Devil and demons under him. This foolish, infidel theory, which is nowadays held by so many preachers and theological professors, is almost as blasphemous as the accusation of the Pharisees. If our Lord knew better than what the Jews held, and He did not correct their views, and if He did not know that their belief was incorrect, then in neither case could He be divine. This is Higher Criticism, the denial of the infallibility and divinity of the living and the written Word. The second argument against their evil thoughts is the following:

"And if I cast out demons, by Beelzebub, your sons b··

*The translation "devils" is not correct. There is one devil, but the fallen angels are demons.

whom do they cast them out? For this reason *they* shall be your judges" (verse 27).

Among the Jews there were and are still such who profess to be exorcists, men who claim to have power to cast out demons. We cannot follow certain traditional teachings of the Jews concerning exorcism at this time. Some of them were wandering exorcists, going from place to place professing to cast out demons. Such are they who are mentioned in Acts xix:13: "And certain of the Jewish exorcists also, who went about, took in hand to call upon those who had wicked spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches." Perhaps those who are mentioned elsewhere, who drove out demons using the name of the Lord and did not follow Him, were exorcists. Certain it is the Lord did not mean His own disciples upon whom He had conferred the power to cast out demons in His name; He meant the school of Pharisees, who practiced, or claimed to practice, exorcism. The question put to them by our Lord demanded an answer which they cared not to give, for it would have been to their own condemnation.

And so He continues with His perfect argumentation, driving it home to their hearts, as only He could do it. "But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then indeed the Kingdom of God is come upon you." It is impossible that Satan could cast out Satan. There remains, then, only one other alternative; the Spirit of God casts out the demons. Then, indeed, the Kingdom is come upon you in the person of the King who manifests this power. Alas! they knew it, but they would not have Him and the Kingdom He preached.

And still His voice is heard: "Or else, can anyone enter into the house of *the* strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first bind the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

The strong man is Satan, but the Lord, stronger than Satan, had bound him and has the power to enter his domain and take away his prey. Who then is He who bound the enemy? Perhaps His voice rested here. Perhaps He waited for an answer. "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God" would have been in order here.

And stronger still He speaks. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not with me scatters." He demands decision. Half-heartedness does not satisfy Him and in face of such open-faced accusations and blasphemies would be impossible. It was an appeal to decide. In our day in which we live, out and out decision is not less demanded. Phariseeism and Sadduceeism, the leaven is working about us and to be undecided is paramount with dishonoring His own glorious person.

"For this reason I say unto you, every sin and injurious speaking shall be forgiven to men but speaking injuriously of the Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. And whosoever shall have spoken a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming one."

Much has been said and written on this passage and on the question of the unpardonable sin. Many who had lived in open sin and worldly lusts, having been arrested by the

grace of God, almost despaired for they feared they had committed that sin and now in spite of their repentance forgiveness was an impossibility for them. This wrong conclusion is often preached in so called "revival meetings" to bring sinners to accept Christ. Believers who fell in sin likewise have thought that after sinning with open eyes, wilfully, they had been guilty of the unpardonable sin. How many poor, ignorant souls have grieved for weeks and months thinking the Holy Spirit had now left them for good. But the Holy Spirit once given to the believer in believing on Christ has come as the *abiding* Comforter. He has come to stay and *never, no never,* to leave that which He has sealed. The Spirit may be grieved, He may be quenched, but never can He be driven away so that the true believer would fall back and be lost.

This widespread doctrine of falling from grace in the sense of the believer's possibility to be lost dishonors Christ and His work for us. But some one says: "Did not David pray: And take not the Holy Spirit from me?" Certainly he did, and it was in order for him to pray thus for the Holy Spirit might have left him, for He was not then in the earth with believers as the abiding comforter. The believer in the New Testament is never exhorted to pray to the Spirit to remain with him. He is to be filled with the Spirit and continually guard against grieving the Spirit or not to quench Him, but never to doubt His presence. All these wrong conceptions spring from a deplorable ignorance of the fundamentals of the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God.

And now what is this sin of which our Lord speaks here?

In His coming to His own people, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were manifested. The Holy Spirit in His power was manifested through the Son, our Lord, upon whom He was in His fullness. The signs He did were not alone done in His own omnipotent power as Jehovah, they were the manifestation of the Holy Spirit likewise. And these Pharisees had sinned against this Holy Spirit by accusing Christ, that He drove out the demons by Satanic power. They had blasphemed the Spirit, spoken injuriously about Him, in saying that Beelzebub, the prince of demons, was present with Christ and not the Holy Spirit. This they did maliciously. And this and nothing else is the sin of which our Lord here speaks. The sin is to charge the Lord with doing His miracles through Satanic power and not through the Holy Spirit. We do believe, therefore, that this sin could only be committed as long as our Lord Jesus Christ was in the earth and that it was committed by the Pharisees with their blasphemies. This is the sin which would not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the coming one. In 1 John v:16-17, we read, "If any one see his brother sinning, a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life, for those that do not sin unto death. There is a sin to death. I do not say of that that he should make a request." This is to be explained in the following way. The brother is a believer. On account of sinning he is chastised. God permits sickness to come upon him and the sinning not having been unto death (physical death *only*) he is raised up. However, a believer may go on *wilfully sinning* and remain there dishonoring Christ. He is to be taken away out of the

land of the living, cut off by death. No request could be made for such a one. The question of death is not eternal condemnation but only physical death.

From the fact of the sin these Pharisees were doing, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Lord now turns to the cause of this, the spring from which the evil comes. "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt. For from the fruit the tree is known. Offspring of vipers! how can ye speak good things, being wicked?" (verse 33-34). The Searcher of hearts, He who understandeth the thoughts afar off, uncovers the real condition of these men and the condition of man in general. The tree is bad, the fruit must be bad. The tree must be made good, and that denotes a change, and the fruit will be good. "The heart is deceitful above all, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart" (Jerm. xvii:9, 10). He does it here and speaks of them as John, the forerunner did, as "offspring of vipers," with wicked hearts and impossible to bring forth anything good. And, later, once more He spoke of the condition of the heart of man, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matth. xv:19). How little those Pharisees, and Sadducees as well, believed in this and how unwilling they were to accept the sentence and verdict of Him, who knoweth all things. They were given to their ceremonial, ritualistic observances, very scrupulous about their phylacteries and fringes of their garments, making long prayers, keeping the outside of the cup and

the platter clean, but never acknowledging the condition of the heart before the Searcher of Hearts. Self-righteous, moral, religious and, with it all, "offspring of vipers." All their religious observances and outward morality did not and could not effect a change. And so they stood before Him whose finger had written the law, boasting in the keeping of the law and rejecting the Lord, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

The leaven of the Pharisees is still at work. This leaven has leavened, indeed, the whole lump. Ritualistic, religious, moral Christendom, professing, and not possessing, is the direct descendant of the Pharisee of old and as such the offspring of vipers as much as they were. How little the radical, complete corruption of man is believed in Christendom, how little it is taught. Man with the good spark in him (as they claim), developing it by religiousness and the use of his own will, becomes and is his own Saviour. The Lord is looked upon not as Lord, but as Jesus of Nazareth, whose life is an example, while the atonement, the blood, is set aside and rejected. The wicked heart cannot bring forth good things. Fine and polished, sweet and harmonious, may be the language of the cultured, religious, unsaved man, but proceeding from an evil heart it can never please God. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of the good treasure brings forth good things and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure brings forth wicked things. But I say unto you that every idle word which men shall say, they shall render an account of it in judgment day; for by thy words thou

shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (verse 35-37).

These words have been misunderstood and much misapplied and all this by wresting these words out of their connection. They are mostly applied in connection with that unscriptural phrase and doctrine, "universal judgment." According to this, even the words will be weighed and judged, and only then in that hour of judgment, will it be known, according to this teaching, who will be saved and who is lost. Our Lord did not teach this here nor is it taught anywhere else. These Pharisees were proud of their works and were self-righteous. If they relied on their works as a means of their justification and salvation they have to expect a judgment accordingly; every idle word is to be judged, which means utter, absolute condemnation. Their words could not be good because they were wicked. May the self-righteous, religious man remember this. Absolute condemnation awaits him. Salvation is by grace, and by that salvation man receives a good treasure and brings forth good things. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth then speaks. Futhermore, the word "idle" means useless, barren. All that which man speaks out of himself is barren and useless. The believer, however, living after the Spirit, will not utter useless words, but that which is in honor of the Son of God. As believers, we should bear constantly in mind that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, not for a decision of eternal salvation, this was settled when the believer trusted in Christ,

but for rewards. Surely then our deeds, our works and our words will be either approved or disapproved.

"By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." This has also a reference to the familiar passage in Romans x: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And wherever there is not this confession springing from the belief of the heart there is condemnation.

The scene is now drawing to its close. The hard-heartedness of the Pharisees is seen by some of them coming after such words, saying, Teacher, we desire to see a sign from Thee. Whatever evil design they had in asking him thus we do not know. He had done sign upon sign and they had ample proofs of His divinity. Upon such an evil, unbelieving request He can only utter His righteous indignation. So He calls them a wicked and adulterous generation. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it save the sign of Jonas the prophet. For, even as Jonas was in the great fish three days and three nights, thus shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Ninevites shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold more than Jonas is here" (verse 38-41). This is a most significant passage. How far the Pharisees believed the story of Jonas we do not know. The Sadducees no doubt rejected the book of Jonah, for they were the rationalists and critics of their day. It is significant for us in our

day when the judgment to fall upon apostate Christendom is so near, nothing is more ridiculed than the book of Jonah and its sublime teachings. The Sadducees of the present day, the higher critics, assume to know more than the Lord, and by rejecting the book of Jonah as uninspired they reject the infallible Lord Himself. But why does our Lord mention Jonah here? Because Jonah is a type of the death and resurrection of our Lord. Jonah is the only prophet who was sent away from Israel's land far unto the Gentiles, to the great and ungodly city of Nineveh. However, before he went there, he passed through a death experience and out of that grave in which he was brought he was taken again, a type of resurrection. Through it God brought salvation to the Gentiles, for Jonah, after his death and resurrection experience proclaimed the message of God. So the Lord was going away from Israel. He was soon to leave them, and the grace of God was to go out towards the Gentile world. Yet before that could be He had to go into the jaws of death, and, like Jonah, was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so was He to be the same length of time in the grave, but also to come forth in resurrection. He was preached, after His resurrection, to the Jew first; but while Nineveh repented after the message of Jonah, that wicked and adulterous generation did not repent of their course, after the preaching through Him, who is greater than Jonah. Therefore the Ninevites will rise up and condemn that generation. Jonah is likewise a type of the whole nation, which, however, is not before us in this

chapter.* The Queen of Sheba also will condemn that generation, she came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and here stands He who is *the Wisdom* and they reject Him, who imparted to the wise King the wisdom he had.

And this is followed by a prediction by our Lord which concerns the future of that generation. "But when the unclean spirit has gone out of the man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then he says, I will return to my house whence I came out; and having come he finds it unoccupied, swept and adorned. Then he goes and takes with himself seven other spirits worse than himself, and entering in, they dwell there; and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. Thus it shall be to this wicked generation also" (verse 43-45). All kinds of interpretations and applications have been made of this prediction. It is, however, clear that there is but one application, and that is in respect to the unbelieving generation. "Thus shall it be to this wicked generation also"—settles the point of application. Generation is certainly to be understood in the sense of race. The unclean spirit is idolatry. It had left the nation, and even now the nation is swept from that evil spirit and unoccupied, and boasts of reform. It will not be so forever. The unclean spirit will return and bring seven others with him and take possession of that house again, and the last condition, the end, becomes worse than the beginning. The

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*See our tract on "Jonah and the Whale," where the dispensational side is expounded.

return of the unclean spirit with its seven companions will take place during the great tribulation.

The end of the rejection of our Lord by His own has come. He has outlined their dreadful end, and to which Israel's unbelief is rapidly leading on, and now follows a pathetic ending of this great crisis. "But while He was yet speaking to the crowds, behold His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him. Then one said to Him, Behold Thy mother and Thy brethren are standing without, seeking to speak to Thee. But He answered and said to him who had spoken to Him, Who is My mother and who are My brethren? And stretching out His hand to His disciples, He said, Behold My mother and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in the heavens, he is My brother and sister and mother." From Mark's Gospel we learn the possible reason of His relatives coming to Him. "And His relatives having heard of it went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, He is out of His mind" (Mark iii:21).

He refuses to see them. Behind this refusal stands the fact of a broken relationship. He no longer recognizes His own, and speaks of a new relationship, founded upon obedience to the will of His Father in the heavens.

CHAPTER XIII.

We have now reached one of the most important chapters in this Gospel. It demands, therefore, our closest attention, and this more so because the revelation which our Lord gives here, the unfolding of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, has been and still is grossly misunderstood and falsely interpreted. Precisely that which our Lord did not mean has been read into this chapter. The whole chapter has been, so to speak, turned upside down by most of the learned commentators of Christendom. For any believer to turn to these for light and instruction will only result in getting thoroughly confused. We have often said if this one chapter would be rightly understood by the professing church, the consequences would be the most far-reaching. But one almost despairs of seeing the true meaning of the mystery of the kingdom in Matthew xiii believed in Christendom. The professing mass continues, and will continue, with the majority of those who are not merely outward professors, to build upon the misinterpretation of our Lord's parables the optimistic dreams of the enlargement of the church, the foreshadowing of the universal extension of the church and the continued good work of the leaven in the three measures of meal, etc. We have found in our experience, that it is hard to get the individual believer, brought up in these wrong conceptions,

to see the true meaning; and often the testimony given is rejected. Let us then carefully and prayerfully look into the chapter before us, and may our Lord give His blessing; and while the many may reject what we teach from these parables it may be a few receive light through the entrance of His Word, and may all believers in these truths be strengthened.

Let us notice, first of all, two verses in this chapter; "Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given" (verse 11); "All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and without a parable He did not speak to them, so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the world's foundation" (verses 34-35). These verses then tell us what our Lord makes known in this chapter, namely *"the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens"—"Things uttered, which were hidden from the world's foundation."*

In Genesis we read of one who is called "Zaphnath-paaneah" which, according to rabbinical interpretation, means "Revealer of secrets." He is Joseph, the Hebrew lad rejected by his brethren, that most perfect type of our Lord. After his rejection by his brethren, Joseph becomes the revealer of the secrets, and that through the wisdom of God.

Here in this chapter Christ appears as the rejected one, and now after the offer of the kingdom is rejected by the people of the kingdom, and He as king, is likewise rejected,

He becomes the revealer of the secrets, to show what will take place after the Kingdom has been rejected by Israel, and postponed.

That He is the rejected one and the far-reaching witness He gives now is evident in the very opening verses. "And that same day Jesus went out from the house and sat down by the sea." Leaving the house means He severed His relation with His people as we saw at the close of the twelfth chapter. Taking His place by the sea, the sea typifying nations, shows that His testimony to be given now, the mysteries to be revealed have a wider sphere; they are relative to the nations. "And great crowds were gathered together to Him, so that going on board ship He sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the shore." He separated Himself from the multitude, while in the first part of this Gospel He moves in the midst of the multitudes, here He takes His place alone. What a scene it must have been! There on the seashore the multitude, and He alone some ways from the shore—He cannot be reached by *touch* now. All is significant. Then when all eyes hang upon His lips, He began to speak.

What He says is in parables, and without parables He did not speak to them. He utters seven parables. In no other Gospel do we find them grouped together as here. Why is this? This is the great dispensational Gospel. Here God's plan of the ages is revealed as in no other Gospel. We have seen before that the Holy Spirit in giving us this Gospel, the Genesis of the New Testament, is not tied down to chronological order,

but He arranges everything to suit His sublime purpose. After the kingdom was offered and rejected, the Lord makes known what is to be after this rejection, and during the time of His absence. Therefore these parables, seven in number, denoting completeness, are put right in here.

Now the important question is when the Lord says six times in these parables, "The kingdom of the heavens is like" what does He mean by the term "Kingdom of the heavens?" That it can no longer mean the kingdom as it is revealed in the Old Testament, as it is promised to Israel, and as He offered it to the people, is evident. For in the first place, the offer was made and rejected. The preaching of Him and the messengers He sent out was, "The kingdom of the heavens it at hand, repent." Not a word do we hear of this in the thirteenth chapter, nor after this chapter. And in the second place, if our Lord had had the Old Testament kingdom promised to Israel in view, when He says here "The Kingdom of the heavens is like," He could not have said that He uttered things hidden from the world's foundation, for the kingdom, in the Old Testament is not a mystery, but clearly revealed.

Some say, and indeed the popular and almost universally accepted interpretation is—it is the church. The Lord begins now to teach about the church. So that if He says: "The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal," etc., it is declared the church is meant, and the Gospel. The church is nowhere called the kingdom of the heavens. Oh, the great confusion which exists on this topic. The

Lord mentions the word church only once in the Gospel, and that is in Matthew xvi., where He says that He *will build His church.* The church did not exist in the Old Testament, it was not known there at all; it was not in existence while the Lord walked in the earth, and *nowhere* does He refer to the church as the kingdom of the heavens, neither does the Holy Spirit speak of the church as the kingdom. He speaks of the church as the habitation of God, a house, a temple, the body of Christ and the Bride of Christ, but we repeat it, *never* as the kingdom of the heavens. All this modern application of kingdom of the heavens to the church is foreign to the Word of God. It is the unscriptural theory of man.

But what does our Lord mean when He says "the kingdom of the heavens?" The answer is a very simple one. The kingdom on the one hand was rejected by Israel, but on the other hand, God gives His Word to the Gentiles, a fact indicated in the Old Testament prophetic Word.

The mercy and grace offered to Israel is to go forth to the Gentiles, the nations, while the King Himself is absent. This is indicated in the first parable where the sower *went out,* which stands for the fact of His going forth into the field, which is the world. So that which is extended to the Gentiles and that in which the name of Christ is confessed is now the kingdom of the heavens, and of this development of what He the Lord from heaven brought and left in the earth, our Lord speaks in these parables. In one word "the kingdom of the heavens" in Matthew is equivalent with *"Christendom."* It includes

the whole sphere of Christian profession saved and unsaved, so-called Romanists and Protestants, all who are naming the name of Christ. Therefore the church is not the kingdom of the heavens, though the church is in the kingdom of the heavens.

The Lord teaches in the seven parables how matters will go in the earth while He is not here, and what men will do with that which He brought from heaven and left in the hands of men.

Before we take up the parables separately we must consider their general character. The seven parables are first divided into four and three. The first four He speaks before the multitudes. Then after He dismissed the crowds, He went into the house and in the presence of the disciples He utters the three last parables. These three last ones, the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price and the dragnet, have a deeper spiritual meaning than the first. The first two parables our Lord explains Himself to His disciples; the other five He leaves unexplained.

They may also be divided in the following way by twos:

1. The sower who went out to sow.
2. The enemy sowing tares, the spurious seed.

These refer in part to the *beginning* of the kingdom of the heavens in the hands of men, however the conditions pictured here last to the end, the time of the harvest.

3. The parable of the mustard seed.
4. The parable of the leaven.

These fortell the external and internal development of

the kingdom of the heavens, the progress is described and it is an unnatural and evil progress.

5. The parable of the treasure hid in the field.

6. The parable of the one pearl.

These stand for the two mysteries of the kingdom, God's earthly people hid in the field, the church the one pearl for which He has given all. First the pearl is taken, then the treasure is lifted in the field.

7. The parable of the dragnet.

It stands isolated, and refers to the end of the kingdom of the heavens in its mystery form.

Still another way of looking at them would be to compare them with the seven church messages in Rev. ii and iii. Here the Lord speaks again, and this speaking is from the glory. In the seven messages we learn the beginning, the progress and the end of this present Christian age. It is the history of Christendom, the kingdom of the heavens.

1. The parable of the sower—*Ephesus.* The apostolic age. The beginning with failure—leaving the first love.

2. The parable of the evil seed—*Smyrna,* meaning bitterness. The enemy revealed.

3. The parable of the mustard seed—*Pergamos*—meaning high tower and twice married. The professing church becomes big, a state institution under Constantine the Great. The big tree and the unclean birds (nations) find shelter there.

4. The parable of the leaven—*Thyatira*—the one who sacrifices. Rome and her abomination. The woman Jeze-

bel, the harlot, corresponds to the woman in the parable of the leaven.

5. The parable of the treasure hid—*Sardis*—the reformation age—having a name to live, but being dead and a remnant there. Israel, dead but belonging to Him who has purchased the field.

6. The parable of the Pearl—*Philadelphia.* The church, the *one pearl.* The one body of Christ and the removal of the church to be with Him.

7. The parable of the dragnet—*Laodicea*—Judgment. I will spue thee out of my mouth.

We do not claim to teach all this exhaustively. That would take many months, but we give these that each reader may have hints in what way to search.

We add but one more fact to these introductory remarks to the study of the different parables. The key for their right interpretation is in themselves as well as in the scriptures. The sower in the first parable and in the second is the Son of Man. What He sows is the wheat, that which stands throughout the scriptures for purity, for Christ himself. The Word He is Himself and the corn of wheat; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The field is the world. The enemy is the Devil. The man in the sixth parable who buys the field (the world) is the same Son of Man and the merchantman who sells all He has to purchase the one pearl He desires is the same person as the Sower. It is nonsense to make out of the merchantman and out of the man who buys the field the sinner. That

would mean that the sinner has something to give. He has not. And the field, meaning the world, it would mean the sinner is to buy the world.

The three measures of meal of course come from the wheat, they *always* stand for that which is good. Leaven, however, *never* means anything good, but it always stands for evil. The closer study of these parables, which we now take up will bring out all this more fully.

After having studied this important chapter in a general way, we shall now look at the seven parables separately and to learn from them the development of the Kingdom of the Heavens in its mystery form. Throughout our study the dispensational aspect of the parables is to be kept strongly in the foreground, for it is dispensational truth which is taught here.

The first parable is the well-known one of the sower. "And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying, Behold the sower went out to sow." Two thing attract our attention in this opening sentence of the parable. We notice first that our Lord speaks of *the* sower, not of *a* sower, and when He expounds the parable later to His disciples He does not tell them who this sower is, but He only speaks of what happened to the seed He sowed. The second thing we mention is that the sower went *out*.

The personality of the sower is not difficult to clear up, for in explaining the second parable our Lord says: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." Our Lord Himself is the Sower. He came with the precious seed, the fine wheat, and of course He himself is the corn of wheat.

The seed He sows can only bring forth as it falls upon good ground, and in the ground it dies, and out of death comes the fruit. All this is indicated here. We would, however, take this parable in the first sense to apply to the days of our Lord in the earth. In a wider sense it must be taken as typical of the entire age, in which He is absent from the earth and the Kingdom is in the hands of men. The sowing He began continues still, and the result of sowing is likewise the same.

And what is the significance that it is written that the sower went *out* to sow? It shows the beginning of something new; a new work which the Lord now takes up. Israel had failed to yield fruit. Israel was the vineyard of Isaiah v. "He fenced it in, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press therein; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes . . . and now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down." (Is. v:2-7.) Israel is the fig tree of the parable; the Lord came and found no fruit. The vineyard is laid waste and the fig tree stands barren. It is true, it will not be always so. The vine and the fig tree will bring fruit at last, but in the meantime, while Israel is unfruitful, the sower has gone out to sow. Where has he gone? Where does the sower generally deposit the seed? In the field. What is the field? The divine interpreter gives us the answer. "The field is the

world." So we have here the fact established that after Israel failed the Word is to go forth into the wide world, "beginning in Jerusalem unto Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth."

The question comes at once, what will be the result? Will all the world receive it and every part of the entire field be cultivated? Will the whole field be reached by the seed and the seed spring up and bear an abundant harvest? Will not a single grain be lost? The parable has this very thought as its centre, What becomes of the seed?

What we learn from the parable is far from teaching us the optimistic dream of Christendom of world conversion, so often founded upon a wrong application of these parables. The parable proves that it will not be a universal acceptance of the Word which we can look for in this age; only the fourth part of the seed sown brings forth fruit, and there is again a marked difference in the quantity of fruit in that fourth part. Our Lord then impresses here in this simple parable the fact, which later the Holy Spirit repeats, the age in which He is absent and in which His Word is preached and His grace is offered, that Word will be in greater part rejected, and only a fourth part yields the fruit; the rest is failure.

It is very significant that we meet this important dispensational fact at the very threshold of Matthew xiii. Alas! it has not been believed by the great mass of professing Christians. To speak of failure in this age and deny a soon coming world conversion is frowned upon as a miserable, unbelieving pessimism. One is sometimes even ac-

cused of disbelieving the power of the Holy Spirit to convert the whole world, as if the Holy Spirit had been sent down from heaven for world conversion.

But we shall now read what came from the lips of our Lord in this parable.

"Behold the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some grains fell along the way, and the birds came and devoured them; and others fell upon the rocky places where they had not much earth, and immediately they sprang up out of the ground, because of not having any depths of earth, but when the sun rose they were burned up, and because of not having any root were dried up; and others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them; and others fell upon the good ground, and produced fruit, one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty. He that has ears let him hear" (verses 5-9). We need not to guess the meaning of this parable for the Lord Himself tells His disciples what He meant by the birds and the rocky place and the thorns. And so we shall take His own explanation with such comments which may be helpful for a fuller understanding.

"The disciples came up to Him and said, Why speakest thou to them in parables?" This question came at once after He had finished this first parable. They had never heard a parable from His lips. What He had spoken before to the people and their leaders had been in simple words, easily to be understood by every one, and now for the first time He spoke something which they could not comprehend. It was veiled. The answer which our Lord

gives is of great solemnity, as it announces the judgment upon Israel.

"And He answering said to them, Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens, but to them it is not given." The disciples, representing believers, were to understand the mysteries coming in now while the nation who had refused the light would be in darkness. "For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall be caused to be in abundance. But he who has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him." The disciples had received the Lord and He gave them more, while Israel had not, they rejected Christ and so what they had still as His earthly people was to be taken away from them. But this two-edged sword cuts in another way. The principle our Lord here utters is still active. The true believers composing the church have, and by and by we shall be caused to be in abundance, while an apostate Christendom which has not shall lose even what it boasts to have.

"For this cause," our Lord continues, "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear nor understand; and in them is filled up the prophecy of Esaias, which says, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and beholding ye shall behold and not see; for the heart of this people has grown fat, and they have heard heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes as asleep, lest they should see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." This passage is a quotation from Isaiah vi:9-10. Isaiah saw in a

vision Jehovah sitting upon a throne, and He spoke these words to the prophet. If we turn to the xii. chapter in the Gospel of John we find these words quoted again, and there is the significant addition, "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him" (John xii:40). The Jehovah Isaiah saw upon His throne was our Lord Jesus Christ. Once more do we read the same words brought to remembrance by the Holy Spirit. In the last chapter of Acts, when Israel's apostasy and unbelief is fully established, Paul speaks them to the assembled Jews and adds, "Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear."

And now after our Lord declares them blessed on account of what they see and hear, He explains the parable Himself.

"Ye, therefore, hear the parable of the sower. From every one who hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and catches away what was sown in his heart; this is he that is sown at the wayside" (v. 18-19).

How easy is it then understood. The wayside is hard and trodden down by feet, there the seed fell and birds were ready to snatch it up and devour it.

A hearer or a class of hearers is given here who do not understand the Word. But is it the question of mental capacity of an intellectual understanding? Certainly not. The Lord says the word was "sown in the heart;" it had directed itself to the conscience and could either be accepted or rejected. But the heart would not have it and turned against it; "and does not understand it," means "he

would not understand or receive it." No sooner is this the case and the seed has fallen upon such a ground, a hard heart like the wayside, then the birds come and devour the seed. The birds represent the wicked one. He is present with his agencies and busy to take up whatever was given and rejected. Once more do we read in this chapter of birds; it is in the third parable, that of the mustard seed. The birds there mean nothing good but that which is evil, like in the first parable.

"But he that is sown on the rocky places—this is he that hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in himself, but is for a time only; and when tribulation happens on account of the Word, he is immediately offended" (vv. 20-21).

The rocky ground is lightly covered with earth. There is a sudden springing up, an enthusiastic reception one might say, which pushes itself along. But the sun rises higher, the heat is felt, and there is no resistance, no life to combat these conditions; the delicate thing drops over and is burned up. It had no roots. This little earth on top of the rock may well represent the natural heart of man as the way trodden by men represents it. Only here is the brightest side of the flesh, if one can speak of it in such a way. But behind that little earth is the solid rock, which no plow has broken and where no life is present. How large is this class? It is the great class of professing Christians. They are covering over this old, desperately wicked heart with a little earth. They put on the form of Godliness, while they know nothing of its power. There

is also a great deal of enthusiasm, a springing up of the seed; it looks almost as if there is to be a great result—but alas! there is only the name to live, but death is behind it.

"When the sun rose they were burned up." May we not apply this word also dispensationally? The rocky ground sowers will flourish, and they flourish and increase now with their empty profession and their enthusiastic show at religiousness and world improvement. But the sun will rise, tribulation will come. The great tribulation and the judgments, which precede the rising of the Sun of Righteousness will burn them up and sweep them away.

"And he that is sown among the thorns, this is he who hears the Word, and the anxious care of this life and the deceit of riches choke the Word and he becomes unfruitful" (verse 22).

This is so plain that it needs hardly any comment at all. "The deceit of riches" hinder the growth of the Word. It becomes choked and there is no fruit. How true this is of the present day we all know. The world, the pleasures of the earth, cares and anxiety in getting as much as possible of these phantom things seems to control more and more the outwardly professing masses. All that is of God becomes choked.

Thus we see in these three classes, in which the seed perishes and brings no fruit, the Devil, the Flesh and the World represented. The Devil snatches up and devours, the Flesh attempts and fails, the World surrounds and chokes. And yet how much else might be said in connection with these three classes! No human being could have

spoken such a simple parable with such a deep and far-reaching meaning. The Revealer of Secrets speaks, who knows the hidden things.

"But he that is sown upon the good ground, this is he who hears and understands the Word, who bears fruit also and produces one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty" (verse 23). Hearing, understanding, which is in faith and through faith, fruitbearing and producing, this is the process of the seed in the good ground, a receptive heart prepared by the Grace of God.

We come now to the second parable, in which we find the Kingdom of the heavens mentioned. It was not mentioned in connection with the first parable of the sower. "Another parable set He before them, saying, The Kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field; but while men slept his enemy came and sowed darnel amongst the wheat and went away. But when the blade shot up and produced fruit then appeared the darnel also. And the bondmen of the householder came up and said to him, Sir, hast thou not sown good seed in thy field? Whence then has it darnel? And he said to them, A man that is an enemy has done this. And the bondmen said to him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather it up? But he said, No; lest in the gathering the darnel ye should root up the wheat with it. Suffer both to grow together unto the harvest, and in time of the harvest I will say to the harvestmen, Gather first the darnel, and bind it into bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring together into my granary" (verses 24-30). Again we are

not left to seek for an interpretation. After he had spoken two other parables we read that our Lord in answer to His disciples' question tells them what He meant by the parable. To this perfect interpretation by the divine speaker we have to turn to find the correct and far reaching meaning of this second parable. "Then, having dismissed the crowds, He went into the house; and His disciples came to Him, saying, Expound to us the parable of the darnel of the field. But He answering said, He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world and the good seed are the Sons of the Kingdom, but the darnel are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who has sowed it is the devil, and the harvest is the completion of the age, and the harvestmen are angels" (verses 36-39).

The connection with the first parable is clear. The same sower is in the beginning of the parable before us, and the seed is deposited in the field, which is the world. But our Lord says, "the good seed, these are the Sons of the Kingdom." This can mean only one thing, namely, that the good seed sown and fallen into a good ground, as we saw in the first parable, brings forth fruit, and the Word of the Kingdom produces the Sons of the Kingdom. Like begets like; the fruit is according to the seed. However, the leading thought in this parable is the enemy and his evil work. It is a work of spite, as it is yet quite often practiced in oriental countries. The enemy watches till his hated neighbor has deposited his seed into the field, then he goes to work and during the night, while men sleep, and begins to sow the bad seed of some weed. Not till the seed springs

up and grows does the unsuspecting victim see the work of the enemy. The enemy, our Lord says, is the devil. As from the Word of the Kingdom the Sons of the Kingdom spring forth, so from the evil seed sown by the devil come the sons of the evil one.

It is important to notice the *time* when the enemy did this and the *manner* in which he attempts to counteract the work of the Sower, the Son of Man.

In regard to the time, we have two facts to consider. The first is: It was immediately after the Sower had deposited the good seed; and the second fact: It was "while men slept." No sooner had our Lord brought the truth, and the Holy Spirit had been given, than the enemy began its work. In the days of the Apostle Paul the work which the enemy had done became manifest, and the evil seed, which at the end of this age is full grown, is easily seen springing up in the beginning of the age. The mystery of iniquity began its work then, and continues throughout the age till the end is reached, when it is fully developed.

It was while men slept that the enemy did it. Not the Sower slept, He neither sleeps nor slumbers, but the men slept. Such an unwatchful condition soon developed in the beginning of the age. The first love was soon given up, and then the enemy did his work.

The manner was by putting a counterfeit seed in the field. The darnel looks in its seed like the wheat. When it springs up it cannot be distinguished from the wheat, yet it is a poisonous weed. The darnel represents the lie as it is put into the field by the devil. It is evil doctrine,

a counterfeit of the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints. The denial of the Deity of our Lord, the denial of the resurrection and the inspiration of the Bible belong to this darnel seed, which makes itself felt in the very beginning of this Christian age.

In a certain sense this process still continues. Whenever the truth is proclaimed and the Word taught, it does not take long before the enemy comes and brings the counterfeit when "men sleep." Another strong lesson we learn from this parable is the character of this entire age. It is evil. Satan is the god of this age till the end of the age comes. The mixed condition of good seed and darnel seed, Sons of the Kingdom and sons of the evil one, prevails to the very end. The servants of the bondmen were willing to root out the darnel but were not permitted to do so. It is an idle dream, which many hope to realize, to reform the world, to gather out obnoxious evils, to banish drunkenness and immorality, to purify the state and politics. Such efforts are nowhere taught in the Word of God. Men, under Christian profession, take such work upon themselves, and they little know how they sin and dishonor Christ with it. No, error and its fruits will continue to grow alongside the good seed and its precious fruit till the time of the harvest. Before we follow the thought of the harvest we turn our attention to still another matter in connection with the first part of this parable.

A vital error has been committed in regard to the place where the wheat and the darnel grow together. It has been said to us "we cannot have a pure church, or

assembly, for the Lord Himself has said that the evil will always be with us and that we are not to put them out who are the sons of the evil one." This was said and is said on the supposition that our Lord speaks of the Church. However, this is not the case. The church, the assembly, is not before Him at all. As we have said before the Kingdom of the heavens is not the Church. When it comes to the revelation concerning the Church we hear our Lord say that evil is not to be tolerated in the assembly. "If thy brother sin against thee go, reprove him between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he do not hear, take with thee one or two besides that every matter may stand upon the word of two witnesses or of three. But if he will not listen to them, tell it to the assembly and if also he will not listen to the assembly, let him be to thee as one of the nations and a taxgatherer" (Chap. xviii:15-17). This is the way evil is to be treated in the assembly, or, as we generally say, Church. In the epistles we find numerous exhortations that evil doctrine and an evil walk contrary to the Gospel is not to be tolerated in an assembly. The assembly is to judge evil. It is *not* said of the Church "let them grow together."

The field is not the Church, but the world, and it is in the world that this takes place; in that part of the field where the good seed has been sown, in the entire sphere of professing Christendom.

The harvest is the completion of the age. Our authorized version has it "world." This has misled many

readers of the Word. The end of this world is a good ways off yet. The end of the age in which we live is drawing rapidly to a close. What will take place then? Our Lord says, "As then the darnel is gathered and is burned in the fire, thus it shall be in the completion of the age. The Son of Man shall send His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all offences, and those that practice lawlessness, and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their father. He that hath ears let him hear" (verses 40-43). Before in the parable our Lord said: "I will say to the harvestmen, Gather first the darnel, and bind it into bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring together into my granary."

The completion of the age is the same as in Matthew xxiv, when the disciples asked for the signs of His coming and the completion of the age. The ending of the age will be Jewish; Jewish history resumed in the events which fall into the last week of Daniel, the seventieth week. Of this ending the Lord speaks. The angels will then be the harvestmen. It corresponds to what we read in Rev. xiv: 14-20. "And I looked and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having upon His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Some who teach the unscriptural theory, that the church will remain in the earth to the very end of the age and pass through the great tribulation, have used this parable to support their views. We repeat the parable has nothing to do with the Church. When our Lord speaks of the bundling up of the darnel and the gathering of the wheat into the granary, He did not teach that the wheat is the Church or represents the Church, and that the gathering in of the Church is to be His last act in this age. The wheat, of course, is the good seed, the good seed are the Sons of the Kingdom. That all true believers are the good seed and as such Sons of the Kingdom none would doubt. Yet, after the Church is removed from the earth, before the completion of the age, as foretold in prophecy, begins, there will still be wheat in the earth. There will still be sowing. Indeed it will then be "the Word of the Kingdom" which is preached. The Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed during that end and the seed will spring up. A great multitude will come out of that great tribulation having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. This multitude will be gathered in the time when the darnel are bundled up, preparatory to the burning. The wheat, these Sons of the Kingdom, will be gathered into His granary, kept and preserved for the Kingdom to be established in the earth. "Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." This reminds us very strongly of the language of Matthew xxv: 34. "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World."

These words are *not* addressed to the church, but to that multitude come out of all nations (Rev. vii) and the Kingdom is not the heavenly glory but the *earthly* Kingdom. The Church, her heavenly calling and destination, we repeat again, is *not* in view at all in this second parable.

Let us hold fast the three great facts the parable teaches. These are, as we have seen, the following:

1. The enemy, the devil, began his work in the beginning of the age.

2. The age is mixed, good and evil grow together. This condition cannot be changed throughout the age.

3. The mixed condition will cease with the completion of the age. The Sons of the Kingdom will inherit the Kingdom. The darnel after being bundled up are burned with fire.

The next two parables our Lord spake to reveal still more of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens are the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven.. They belong together. We shall learn in the exposition of these two parables, how the popular interpretation of them through the leading commentators of Christendom has turned everything upside down. The fact is, precisely the opposite our Lord meant is being taught by teachers in evangelical Christendom. The fault of this erroneous interpretation springs from the great fundamental error that the Lord has the church in view when He speaks of the kingdom of the heavens, and that the church is that kingdom. Therefore it is taken for granted by this exposition that when the Lord now speaks of a grain of mustard seed,

which becomes a great tree and which gives shelter to the birds, that this is a prophecy relating to the expansion of the church. The leaven is therefore made to mean the gospel with its leavening power. All this is *radically* wrong. We turn to the parable of the grain of mustard seed first.

"Another parable set He before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which is less indeed than all seeds, but when it is grown is greater than herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches" (verses 31-32).

Here we have the outward development of the kingdom of the heavens as it grows and expands, in an unnatural way, and becomes the roosting place of the birds of *heaven.* As indicated above, the almost universal comment on this mustard seed and its miraculous growth, as it is termed, is that it fully declares the expansion of the church, and the birds of heaven are interpreted as meaning peoples and nations, who find shelter in the church. Growing and still growing, the mustard tree reaches over the entire earth, its branches spread out wider and wider, and soon (so they tell us) the tree will have covered the earth as the waters cover the deep. It is also a common occurrence that some denominational leader—a bishop or an elder—claims the parable for his denomination and illustrates with it the phenomenal growth of the sect to which he belongs, or claims a great future of success. Again, the history of the "church" is resorted to for the sake of showing the fulfillment of this parable and the statistics of Christen-

dom, so many millions of Protestants (including all the infidels, unsaved masses of Germany, England, and every other "evangelical" country) so many more now than fifty years ago. etc.

If the Lord had meant His church by this mustard seed, which becomes a tree and the roosting place of birds, if it is really the church, which is His body, then this parable would be in flagrant contradiction with what He and the Holy Spirit teach elsewhere concerning the church in the earth, the mission and the future of the church. The greatest clash of teaching would be the result.

For instance, in His prayer our Lord says concerning His own, those who are one as the Father and Son are one: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (John xvii:14). The church then, composed of all true believers, is not of the world as He is not of the world. The church is from above, as every believer has a life which is from above; but for a little while the church is *in* the world, and in a little while the church will be above, where He is the glorified Head of His body. The mustard seed springing up in the field (do not forget the field is the *world*), rooting deeper and deeper in the earth and expanding in this unnatural way affording room for birds, is the picture of something entirely different. It shows us a system which is rooted in the earth and which aims a greatness in the world, expansion over the earth. The Lord never meant His church to be rooted and grounded in the field, the world. He never called the church to assume such proportions and become an abnor-

mal growth in the earth. Whatever is spoken of Christ is spoken of the church. Suffering and glory, after lowliness, followed by exaltation, is the way Christ went; it is the way ordained for the church. She is to be lowly, now suffering with Him, rejected and disowned by the world as He was, never to reign and rule now, but patiently waiting with Him for the moment when He is manifested and *then* to share His Throne and His Glory. The calling and destiny of the church is heavenly. Her mission is to shine out Himself and testify of His grace, but never to control and overspread the world. The epistles addressed to the church make this sufficiently clear.

But if the mustard seed and its growth does not mean the *church,* what does it mean? It means the Kingdom of the heavens, and this is, as we have seen before, professing Christendom. At once the parable becomes illuminated with light. Looked upon in this light, in full harmony with all the Lord teaches in this chapter, all is easily understood. The little mustard seed, which was not destined to be a tree but only a shrub, easily taken out of the garden where it had been planted, develops against its nature into a tree. That which came from Him, the Son of Man, the Sower, develops, committed into the hands of men, into an unnatural thing—one might say, a monstrosity—for such a mustard *tree* is. This unnatural thing, this monstrosity, is professing Christendom as a system of the world, professing Christ, without possessing Him and His Spirit.

Here we have to call attention to the third message to the churches in Revelation, the second chapter. That is the mes-

sage to Pergamos, typifying the age of the history of Christendom, beginning with Constantine the Great in the fourth century. The suffering church was made a state church. The mustard seed *suddenly* became the tree, and ever since the professing church has delighted in looking upon herself as a big expanding tree. But notice the perfect agreement—the third parable and the third church message.

The birds which roost in that tree would mean, if the parable applies to the church, converted sinners. Do birds ever represent clean persons? We need not go outside of the chapter to answer this. The birds which fell upon the seed which had fallen by the wayside were instruments of Satan. Birds of heaven, or fowls, never mean anything good in Scripture. Abraham stood in the midst of the pieces of the sacrifices and drove away the fowls which were ready to fall upon the pieces (Gen. xv.). The animals divided there represent Christ and the fowls nothing good. Birds in this parable mean unsaved, unconverted people and nations who flock for selfish motives to the tree, the outward form of Christendom, and find shelter there. But they defile the tree.

At last the tree will be full grown. Of the full grown tree it is said, "Great Babylon has become the habitation (roosting place) of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every *unclean and hated bird*" (Rev. xviii:2).

But let us not forget there is a tree which is to grow up and spread its branches, taking sap out of the root, over

the one pearl is taken up the end of the age begins. This parable falls into the completion of the age. The dragnet is let into the sea, which, as we have seen before, represents the nations. The parable refers to the preaching of the everlasting Gospel as it will take place during the great tribulation (Rev. xiv:6, 7). The separating of the good and the bad is done by angels. All this cannot refer to the present time nor to the church, but to the time when the kingdom is about to be set up. Then angels will be used, as it is so clearly seen in the book of Revelation. The wicked will be cast into the furnace of fire and the righteous will remain in the earth for the millennial kingdom. To follow all this in detail would take us into the history of the seventieth week of Daniel. It is the same "end of the age" which is described in Matthew xxiv.

We have learned from these seven parables the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, beginning with the apostolic age and showing us the conditions which prevail up to its end. It is significant that the last three parables—containing, as we have seen, the mystery of Israel, the mystery of the church, and the mystery of the ending of the age—were spoken in the house to the disciples. The great multitude did not hear them, as they contain truths for His own, to whom alone it is given through the Spirit of God to know the mysteries of the kingdom. And so we read: "Jesus says unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say to Him, Yea, Lord. And He said to them, For this reason every scribe discipled to the kingdom of the heavens is like a man that is a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old"

(verses 51, 52). The things old are the things revealed in the Old Testament and the new things those of the new dispensation, which are given in these parables in a nut-shell.

Upon this declaration there follows a symbolical action of our Lord. "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these parables, He withdrew thence." The revealer of the secrets has given His revelation and now He disappears from the scene. It stands in type for His bodily absence from the earth during this age.

The end of the chapter is in full accord with the beginning and the teaching of the entire chapter. "And having come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogues, so that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom and these works of power? Is not this the son of a carpenter? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James and Joseph, and Simeon and Juda? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, unless in His country and in his house. And he did not there many works of power, because of their unbelief" (verses 54-58).

What else is all this but evidence of His full rejection. His own knew Him not. They speak of His earthly relations. For them He is "this man." His Father they knew not. They call Him "the son of the carpenter." And thus He is rejected still by His earthly people; and alas! many of those who call themselves by His name during this age treat Him no better. With the next chapter we shall follow the story of His rejection.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

AN EXPOSITION

BY

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CHAPTER XIV.

The fourteenth chapter contains the record of events put together so as to harmonize with the purpose of this Gospel. The Lord had revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, mysteries, as we have seen, repeated by the Lord in His seven messages to the churches in Revelation ii and iii. At the end of the previous chapter we learned once more of His rejection. "They were offended at Him." In the chapter before us He appears as the rejected One. The right key to understand the events described here, is to look upon all dispensationally. We have in them a description of what takes place while the King is absent and rejected by His own people. At the end of this chapter He comes in the fourth watch, and with His coming brings the calm for the troubled sea and His troubled disciples.

The first incident we find is the martrydom of John the Baptist. Herod stands with his kingdom and abomination for the world, the prince of this age, and his persecutions. The record is put in here to show that during the absence of the King, the world will hate and persecute those who are of the Truth, but it carries us on to the end likewise, when a false king will rule once more—the Antichrist; typified by Herod.

The second incident is the miraculous feeding of the five thousand men, besides women and children. He had gone to a desert place, but the crowds followed Him, and He supplies their need in His own miraculous way. The keeping of His people is here demonstrated, while on the other

hand, we find spiritual lessons, which lead us deeper, especially if we compare this section with the record in the Gospel of John.

The third incident is the storm on the sea, lasting a whole night, during which the Lord is absent. He went into the mountain apart to pray, which is a picture of His presence with the Father during this age. This section is especially rich in dispensational lessons. We learn from this short outline of the fourteenth chapter, that it forms a kind of birdseye view of the age, which follows the rejection of our Lord.

"At that time Herod, the tetrarch, heard of the fame of Jesus, and said to his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and because of this, these works of power display their force in him" (verses 1, 2).

The Herod mentioned here is not the Herod in the second chapter of the Gospel. The Herod under which the children of Bethlehem were slain was Herod the Great, an Idumean who had been proclaimed king of the Jews by Rome and exercised his evil reign under the protection of Rome. After his death Archelaus became tetrarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, Philip of Trachonitis and Herod Antipas of Galilee and Peraea, who also had the title of tetrarch. It is this Herod who is before us in this chapter He was married to a daughter of King Aretas of Arabia. He lived, however, in open adultery with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Like his father, Herod the Great, he was a wicked man, the murderer of John the Baptist. He was followed by Herod Agrippa, under whose regime the persecution of the Christians broke out in Jerusalem.

The dreadful end of this wicked king is described in Acts xii. He was smitten by an angel of God and eaten by worms. His son, named likewise Herod Agrippa, took his place.

These Herods—who ruled under Rome over Immanuel's land and were such bloody men, false kings upon a throne, which was not theirs—are all types of Antichrist, that false king, who comes in his own name and will be received by the Jews.

During this entire age "the mystery of iniquity already works," and in the end of it that wicked one will be revealed. Satan rules over the world now, and by and by, his power will have full sway for a little while, and then through the revived Roman Empire, the beast out of the sea, a false king, the great final Herod, will rule and reign, as well as the beast out of the earth.

These dispensational facts make it clear why the story of John's martrydom is introduced now in this Gospel. It is brought forth here to show that alongside of the kingdom of the heavens in its mysteries, there is the kingdom of the world culminating in a wicked leader, the man of sin and son of perdition.

The incident itself comes in at the time when our Lord sent out His disciples. In the fourth chapter we heard that John was delivered up (iv:12). In the eleventh he sent his disciples from the prison to the Lord, and now his fate is made known *after* the Lord had revealed the secret things.

On account of the report concerning Jesus, Herod is troubled, like his father before him was troubled, when the wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Conscience speaks with a loud voice, and though Herod was neither a Pharisee nor a Sadducee, he is superstitious and looks upon Jesus as John the Baptist risen from the dead. It is still so; where there is no faith, superstitions hold sway. And why was he troubled and uneasy? Why did his conscience speak? "For Herod had seized John, and had bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of

his brother Philip. For John had said to him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And while desiring to kill him, he feared the crowd, because they held him for a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod; whereupon he promised with oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. But she, being set on by her mother, says, Give me here upon a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the king was grieved; but on account of the oaths, and those lying at table with him, he commanded it to be given. And he sent and beheaded John in the prison; and his head was brought upon a dish, and was given to the damsel, and she carried it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it and came and told Jesus. And Jesus having heard it, went away thence by ship to a desert place apart" (verses 3-13).

What a scene of wickedness and crime, lust and bloodshed is here revealed! It is the true picture of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And this world, this age is unchanged. It is not improved and gradually subdued. This evil world is not getting better. It is not giving up its lust and pride, its hatred and persecution under "the civilizing influence of Christendom" as it is claimed. The things manifested here by the Spirit of God, as they transpired at the merry feast of Herod are the same to-day. The hatred of the Truth and the servant of the Lord is the same. The lust of the flesh and the eyes and the pride of life have not changed a particle. All is present with all its disgusting features in the midst of the boasted "civilizing influences of Christendom."

John had been faithful in discharging his God-given ministry. Openly he had confronted the despot with his evil doing and a dungeon becomes his lot. How often it

has been repeated throughout the age. How many faithful servants have been hated and persecuted thus. The world receives not the truth, but hates it. Having rejected the Lord and hated Him, the world rejects and hates Him who is of the truth. How sad to look upon that which *professes* to be the church, that which professes to be Christian and to see it in friendship with the world! At last professing and apostate Christendom will form that great world centre, and centre of abomination and wickedness, "Babylon the Great," and in her will be found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth (Rev. xviii:24).

Oh, let us herald it forth, separation from the world! "Adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, is minded to be the friend of the world is the constituted enemy of God" (James iv:4). May it reach our conscience that we may live indeed as such who are *in* the world but not *of* the world, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. Like John the Baptist, let us be faithful in our testimony, no matter what the consequences may be.

John represents here also him who is one of the two witnesses. Elijah will come once more, not now, but at the Jewish end of the age; not in this country, but in Israel's land. As a witness, with his companion, he will witness against the beast, and will be slain by it, as John was slain by Herod.

We pass over the details of that libertine feast, the dance, unquestionably indecent, the beastly mother, with her awful request. Of Herod we read, he was grieved on account of the request. He feared the crowd on the one hand, and on the other he feared those who lay at table with him. He wanted to appear *religious*. If he made an

oath and it was heard by those with him, and he did not keep it, they would surely tell it abroad. If his religiousness led him to commit a murder it is a small matter. How often it has been repeated! Under the garb of religiousness crimes upon crimes have been committed, and the end is not yet.

What a moment it must have been when the messenger entered the dungeon of John and his life is taken. "And he sent and beheaded John in prison." This is all the Spirit of God tells us of it. No doubt John met the messenger in the triumph of faith.

John's disciples came and took the headless body and buried it and then they came and told Jesus.

There they found the comfort and the hope of resurrection and life. What words of cheer He may have given to them we do not read here, but we are sure they came not in vain to Him. And shall *we* come in vain to Him with our cares and griefs, trials and losses? Go and tell Jesus Christ your Lord!

Such then is the world in its hatred and such what the servants of Christ may expect from the world.

Our Lord having heard the report went away to a desert place apart. He knew that it was only a little while longer and He would be rejected, condemned and crucified. But His time had not yet come. He would not hasten matters, however, even if then Herod would have attempted to do anything to him he would have not succeeded. How the Spotless and Holy One must have felt in that hour, when wickedness had reached such a climax! Yet He is silent. No word comes from His lips. No word of disapproval no word of judgment or wrath. Thus He is silent throughout this present evil age until that day comes, His own day, when He will keep silent no longer.

And now as He goes away by ship into a desert place

apart, truly as the Rejected One. The multitudes hearing of it follow Him on foot from the cities. They seek Him in the wilderness, in the place of rejection. In the Gospel of John, chapter vi, we have the full record of what follows and likewise the condition of the people. Here we have only a brief description. "And going out He saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion about them, and healed their infirm" (verse 14). A few words only, but how His grace shines in them. Though He knew their hearts, which were far from seeking Him, yet was He moved with compassion. This is the second time we read of His compassion for the people. Not alone did He pity them but He healed their infirm. It must have kept Him busy as He moved among them, touching the sick and healing their diseases. "But when even was come, His disciples came to Him saying: The place is desert and much of the daytime already gone by; dismiss the crowds that they may go in the villages and buy food for themselves" (verse 15). What a contrast between the compassionate Lord and His disciples! How little they had learned of Him and of His gracious ways. Most likely while He was still occupied with the people and still stretching forth His hands with healing power, they interrupted Him in His blessed work, reminding Him of the physical needs of the multitudes. As if He knew not Himself what they needed, as if He cared not for them and their welfare! It was unbelief which manifested itself thus. They even ask the Lord to dismiss the multitudes, to send them away. Heartless, they would have let them find their way back to their villages to satisfy their wants. Instead of looking to the Lord they looked to circumstances, to the numbers of the people. They did not reckon with Him and His power, who fed Israel for forty years in the wilderness, who sent the ravens to Elijah. Such is unbelief.

How calm and sublime is the Lord's answer. No word of reproof falls from His blessed lips. "But Jesus said to them, They have no need to go; give ye them to eat." There was surely no need to go away empty from Him, no need to go elsewhere and seek what He so plentifully can give and does give to all who trust Him. They have no need to go. In this word He reveals Himself once more as the omnipotent Lord. A desert place, and He declares a crowd of five thousand men, besides women and children, have no need to go, to leave Him, to find bread to satisfy their hunger. But still more, He tells His disciples, "give ye them to eat." This they could not understand. They had very little to minister to the great needs of such a company. That the *Lord* could feed them they had not considered, and that they, in giving them to eat, could count on His power to minister to their need was far from their thoughts. Yet this is the lesson which the Lord wanted to teach them and us likewise. He is the All-sufficient One. He has all power, and there is no need for anyone to go away empty from Him. He wishes to minister to the needs of His people, through His own. "Give ye them to eat" is still His loving word, and He backs it up with all His grace and riches in glory. We mean, of course, all this of a ministry in spiritual things.

Let us think of this as we minister the things of God, whether it be the Gospel or the ministry of His Word, for the edification of believers. All is entrusted to us by the Head of the Body. He Himself will minister through our ministry if the heart rests believingly in Him and faith looks away from circumstances and difficulties to a rich and gracious Lord in Glory. He knows the needs of all. He is still the compassionate One, and as Lord in glory tells His servants: "Give ye them to eat." Oh for faith to count on Him and His gracious power.

And now they speak, "But they say to Him, We have not here save five loaves and two fishes" (verse 17). From the Gospel of John we learn that the Lord said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat? But this He said trying him, for He knew what He was going to do. Philip answered Him, Loaves for two hundred denarii are not sufficient for them, that each may have some little portion. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, says to Him, There is a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes; but this, what is it for so many?" (John vi:5-9). They even had not the small supply themselves, but it was in the hands of a little boy. How suggestive! It was little, very little they possessed, and it was in the hands of a little boy, one who was weak. It is so with ourselves and the little we have. Blessed are we indeed if we do know how little it is which is in our hands and how much is lacking. But let it not be in unbelief, thinking it is such a little bit, which cannot be used. Nothing is too small, nothing too little, if it is brought to Him; yea, He has chosen the weak things. "Bring them here to Me" is His command. What condescension, He does not despise the little we have, He does not set it aside in manifesting His power. How easy it would have been for Him to speak only a word in that desert place and bread would have fallen again upon the ground, for the crowds to gather and take with them. He wishes to use the little, the weak things, to show forth His power. It is the way He works throughout this age, in which He is the Rejected One.

"Bring them here to Me," and do we bring what we have to Him always? Is every service *first* brought to Him for blessing? Is the little put into His hands *first* for blessing? Are all our undertakings really brought to Him; our little, our all, put at His disposal? If we bring it to

Him He will bless it and with His blessing we can go forth to minister to others. There can be and will be no lack in such ministry in dependence upon Him.

This is true ministry. How far Christendom has drifted away from it, and how short we come of it, with our unbelieving hearts. We ever reckon with circumstances and difficulties and not with the loving, gracious and all sufficient Lord in glory! May we learn and profit by His Word.

"And having commanded the multitudes to recline upon the grass, having taken the five loaves and two fishes, He looked up to heaven and blessed; and having broken the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the multitudes" (verses 18, 19). He blessed and broke the bread, and the broken bread is first put into the hands of the disciples, and after they received they gave it to the people. This is the divine order of ministry. The little handed over to Him, He blesses and we receive first of Him, and what we receive from His hands we can pass on to others.*

What a scene it must have been! Five thousand men besides women and children crowding about Him, and at His loving command they lay down upon the grass and after they found rest He feeds them with His bread. In looking upon that blessed picture we think of Him as *Jehovah-Roi,* the Lord, my Shepherd. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." It is fulfilled here. Jehovah, the Shepherd, is present with His people. Jehovah, the Shepherd, gives them rest and then in the green pastures He refreshes

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*In the Gospel of John He Himself feeds with His own hands the crowds. The ministry of the disciples is not mentioned there, because in John He is described as the Divine One.

them. Thus He acts still. Rest and food in Him and through Him are still His precious gifts to all who put their trust in Him. He Himself is our Rest and our Bread. He satisfies the poor with bread. It is prophetic. He will yet be the great Shepherd of Israel and gather His people, His scattered sheep, and supply their wants. We read of it in that restoration Psalm, the one hundred and thirty-second: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread."

"And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was over and above of fragments twelve hand baskets full. But those that had eaten were about five thousand men besides women and children" (verses 20-21). Here is the miracle. The little was not only sufficient for all, but more was left over at the end than they had in the beginning. His blessing was not only upon the little for all, but He blessed it in such a manner that from it came an abundant increase. It is not different now in the ministry of spiritual things. The more we give out, having received from Him, the greater the increase and possession for us in the end.

In the Gospel of John the definite teachings of our Lord concerning life through Him and in Him the true bread come down from heaven, and the sustenance of that life, are connected with this episode. John's Gospel is the place for that. In the feeding of the people as recorded in Matthew and the applications we have made of it, we have brought out the character of the age, the age in which Israel has rejected her King. Let us notice that the feeding of the multitude closes abruptly. In John vi:15 we read they would make Him king. But the attempt was carnal. No faith in Him, no devotion to His person was

behind it, and the Searcher of hearts had to declare unto them when the crowds sought Him again: "Verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled" (John vi:20). In Matthew's Gospel the whole scene closes without any record about the behaviour of the multitudes. Significantly we read at once: "And immediately He compelled the disciples to go on board the ship, and to go before Him to the other side until He should have dismissed the multitudes. And having dismissed the multitudes, He went up into the mountain apart to pray."

Every word here is pregnant with meaning. He compelled the disciples to go on board ship. A change is to take place by His own arrangement and the people are dismissed by Himself. All this indicates the setting aside of Israel, their rejection, though never complete nor final. He Himself goes up into the mountain apart to pray. The whole night is spent by Him there in the presence of the Father. He is absent, both from the crowds and from His disciples, and while the multitudes He had fed scatter, His disciples are tossed upon the sea. In the prophet Hosea we read that Jehovah saith "I will go and return to My place" (Hosea v:15). His going upon the mountain speaks of His withdrawal and the place which He occupies in the presence of the Father, as intercessor and advocate. The third incident recorded, the stormy night, the storm-tossed disciples, the coming Lord in the fourth watch, Peter's separation to meet him, the morning which brings peace and the renewed healing by the returned Lord, all is full of meaning and rich in typical application.

The night is a picture of the time during which He is absent, this present evil age in which we live. His return from the mountain in the morning foreshadows His second coming and the beginning of a new age.

the one pearl is taken up the end of the age begins. This parable falls into the completion of the age. The dragnet is let into the sea, which, as we have seen before, represents the nations. The parable refers to the preaching of the everlasting Gospel as it will take place during the great tribulation (Rev. xiv:6, 7). The separating of the good and the bad is done by angels. All this cannot refer to the present time nor to the church, but to the time when the kingdom is about to be set up. Then angels will be used, as it is so clearly seen in the book of Revelation. The wicked will be cast into the furnace of fire and the righteous will remain in the earth for the millennial kingdom. To follow all this in detail would take us into the history of the seventieth week of Daniel. It is the same "end of the age" which is described in Matthew xxiv.

We have learned from these seven parables the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, beginning with the apostolic age and showing us the conditions which prevail up to its end. It is significant that the last three parables—containing, as we have seen, the mystery of Israel, the mystery of the church, and the mystery of the ending of the age—were spoken in the house to the disciples. The great multitude did not hear them, as they contain truths for His own, to whom alone it is given through the Spirit of God to know the mysteries of the kingdom. And so we read: "Jesus says unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say to Him, Yea, Lord. And He said to them, For this reason every scribe discipled to the kingdom of the heavens is like a man that is a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old"

(verses 51, 52). The things old are the things revealed in the Old Testament and the new things those of the new dispensation, which are given in these parables in a nut-shell.

Upon this declaration there follows a symbolical action of our Lord. "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these parables, He withdrew thence." The revealer of the secrets has given His revelation and now He disappears from the scene. It stands in type for His bodily absence from the earth during this age.

The end of the chapter is in full accord with the beginning and the teaching of the entire chapter. "And having come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogues, so that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom and these works of power? Is not this the son of a carpenter? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James and Joseph, and Simeon and Juda? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, unless in His country and in his house. And he did not there many works of power, because of their unbelief" (verses 54-58).

What else is all this but evidence of His full rejection. His own knew Him not. They speak of His earthly relations. For them He is "this man." His Father they knew not. They call Him "the son of the carpenter." And thus He is rejected still by His earthly people; and alas! many of those who call themselves by His name during this age treat Him no better. With the next chapter we shall follow the story of His rejection.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

AN EXPOSITION

BY

A. C. GAEBELEIN
Editor of "Our Hope."

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CHAPTER XIV.

The fourteenth chapter contains the record of events put together so as to harmonize with the purpose of this Gospel. The Lord had revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, mysteries, as we have seen, repeated by the Lord in His seven messages to the churches in Revelation ii and iii. At the end of the previous chapter we learned once more of His rejection. "They were offended at Him." In the chapter before us He appears as the rejected One. The right key to understand the events described here, is to look upon all dispensationally. We have in them a description of what takes place while the King is absent and rejected by His own people. At the end of this chapter He comes in the fourth watch, and with His coming brings the calm for the troubled sea and His troubled disciples.

The first incident we find is the martrydom of John the Baptist. Herod stands with his kingdom and abomination for the world, the prince of this age, and his persecutions. The record is put in here to show that during the absence of the King, the world will hate and persecute those who are of the Truth, but it carries us on to the end likewise, when a false king will rule once more—the Antichrist; typified by Herod.

The second incident is the miraculous feeding of the five thousand men, besides women and children. He had gone to a desert place, but the crowds followed Him, and He supplies their need in His own miraculous way. The keeping of His people is here demonstrated, while on the other

hand, we find spiritual lessons, which lead us deeper, especially if we compare this section with the record in the Gospel of John.

The third incident is the storm on the sea, lasting a whole night, during which the Lord is absent. He went into the mountain apart to pray, which is a picture of His presence with the Father during this age. This section is especially rich in dispensational lessons. We learn from this short outline of the fourteenth chapter, that it forms a kind of birdseye view of the age, which follows the rejection of our Lord.

"At that time Herod, the tetrarch, heard of the fame of Jesus, and said to his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and because of this, these works of power display their force in him" (verses 1, 2).

The Herod mentioned here is not the Herod in the second chapter of the Gospel. The Herod under which the children of Bethlehem were slain was Herod the Great, an Idumean who had been proclaimed king of the Jews by Rome and exercised his evil reign under the protection of Rome. After his death Archelaus became tetrarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, Philip of Trachonitis and Herod Antipas of Galilee and Peraea, who also had the title of tetrarch. It is this Herod who is before us in this chapter He was married to a daughter of King Aretas of Arabia. He lived, however, in open adultery with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Like his father, Herod the Great, he was a wicked man, the murderer of John the Baptist. He was followed by Herod Agrippa, under whose regime the persecution of the Christians broke out in Jerusalem.

The dreadful end of this wicked king is described in Acts xii. He was smitten by an angel of God and eaten by worms. His son, named likewise Herod Agrippa, took his place.

These Herods—who ruled under Rome over Immanuel's land and were such bloody men, false kings upon a throne, which was not theirs—are all types of Antichrist, that false king, who comes in his own name and will be received by the Jews.

During this entire age "the mystery of iniquity already works," and in the end of it that wicked one will be revealed. Satan rules over the world now, and by and by, his power will have full sway for a little while, and then through the revived Roman Empire, the beast out of the sea, a false king, the great final Herod, will rule and reign, as well as the beast out of the earth.

These dispensational facts make it clear why the story of John's martrydom is introduced now in this Gospel. It is brought forth here to show that alongside of the kingdom of the heavens in its mysteries, there is the kingdom of the world culminating in a wicked leader, the man of sin and son of perdition.

The incident itself comes in at the time when our Lord sent out His disciples. In the fourth chapter we heard that John was delivered up (iv:12). In the eleventh he sent his disciples from the prison to the Lord, and now his fate is made known *after* the Lord had revealed the secret things.

On account of the report concerning Jesus, Herod is troubled, like his father before him was troubled, when the wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Conscience speaks with a loud voice, and though Herod was neither a Pharisee nor a Sadducee, he is superstitious and looks upon Jesus as John the Baptist risen from the dead. It is still so; where there is no faith, superstitions hold sway. And why was he troubled and uneasy? Why did his conscience speak? "For Herod had seized John, and had bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of

his brother Philip. For John had said to him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And while desiring to kill him, he feared the crowd, because they held him for a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod; whereupon he promised with oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. But she, being set on by her mother, says, Give me here upon a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the king was grieved; but on account of the oaths, and those lying at table with him, he commanded it to be given. And he sent and beheaded John in the prison; and his head was brought upon a dish, and was given to the damsel, and she carried it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it and came and told Jesus. And Jesus having heard it, went away thence by ship to a desert place apart" (verses 3-13).

What a scene of wickedness and crime, lust and blood shed is here revealed! It is the true picture of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And this world, this age is unchanged. It is not improved and gradually subdued. This evil world is not getting better. It is not giving up its lust and pride, its hatred and persecution under "the civilizing influence of Christendom" as it is claimed. The things manifested here by the Spirit of God, as they transpired at the merry feast of Herod are the same to-day. The hatred of the Truth and the servant of the Lord is the same. The lust of the flesh and the eyes and the pride of life have not changed a particle. All is present with all its disgusting features in the midst of the boasted "civilizing influences of Christendom."

John had been faithful in discharging his God-given ministry. Openly he had confronted the despot with his evil doing and a dungeon becomes his lot. How often it

has been repeated throughout the age. How many faithful servants have been hated and persecuted thus. The world receives not the truth, but hates it. Having rejected the Lord and hated Him, the world rejects and hates Him who is of the truth. How sad to look upon that which *professes* to be the church, that which professes to be Christian and to see it in friendship with the world! At last professing and apostate Christendom will form that great world centre, and centre of abomination and wickedness, "Babylon the Great," and in her will be found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth (Rev. xviii:24).

Oh, let us herald it forth, separation from the world! "Adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, is minded to be the friend of the world is the constituted enemy of God" (James iv:4). May it reach our conscience that we may live indeed as such who are *in* the world but not *of* the world, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. Like John the Baptist, let us be faithful in our testimony, no matter what the consequences may be.

John represents here also him who is one of the two witnesses. Elijah will come once more, not now, but at the Jewish end of the age; not in this country, but in Israel's land. As a witness, with his companion, he will witness against the beast, and will be slain by it, as John was slain by Herod.

We pass over the details of that libertine feast, the dance, unquestionably indecent, the beastly mother, with her awful request. Of Herod we read, he was grieved on account of the request. He feared the crowd on the one hand, and on the other he feared those who lay at table with him. He wanted to appear *religious*. If he made an

oath and it was heard by those with him, and he did not keep it, they would surely tell it abroad. If his religiousness led him to commit a murder it is a small matter. How often it has been repeated! Under the garb of religiousness crimes upon crimes have been committed, and the end is not yet.

What a moment it must have been when the messenger entered the dungeon of John and his life is taken. "And he sent and beheaded John in prison." This is all the Spirit of God tells us of it. No doubt John met the messenger in the triumph of faith.

John's disciples came and took the headless body and buried it and then they came and told Jesus.

There they found the comfort and the hope of resurrection and life. What words of cheer He may have given to them we do not read here, but we are sure they came not in vain to Him. And shall *we* come in vain to Him with our cares and griefs, trials and losses? Go and tell Jesus Christ your Lord!

Such then is the world in its hatred and such what the servants of Christ may expect from the world.

Our Lord having heard the report went away to a desert place apart. He knew that it was only a little while longer and He would be rejected, condemned and crucified. But His time had not yet come. He would not hasten matters, however, even if then Herod would have attempted to do anything to him he would have not succeeded. How the Spotless and Holy One must have felt in that hour, when wickedness had reached such a climax! Yet He is silent. No word comes from His lips. No word of disapproval no word of judgment or wrath. Thus He is silent throughout this present evil age until that day comes, His own day, when He will keep silent no longer.

And now as He goes away by ship into a desert place

apart, truly as the Rejected One. The multitudes hearing of it follow Him on foot from the cities. They seek Him in the wilderness, in the place of rejection. In the Gospel of John, chapter vi, we have the full record of what follows and likewise the condition of the people. Here we have only a brief description. "And going out He saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion about them, and healed their infirm" (verse 14). A few words only, but how His grace shines in them. Though He knew their hearts, which were far from seeking Him, yet was He moved with compassion. This is the second time we read of His compassion for the people. Not alone did He pity them but He healed their infirm. It must have kept Him busy as He moved among them, touching the sick and healing their diseases. "But when even was come, His disciples came to Him saying: The place is desert and much of the daytime already gone by; dismiss the crowds that they may go in the villages and buy food for themselves" (verse 15). What a contrast between the compassionate Lord and His disciples! How little they had learned of Him and of His gracious ways. Most likely while He was still occupied with the people and still stretching forth His hands with healing power, they interrupted Him in His blessed work, reminding Him of the physical needs of the multitudes. As if He knew not Himself what they needed, as if He cared not for them and their welfare! It was unbelief which manifested itself thus. They even ask the Lord to dismiss the multitudes, to send them away. Heartless, they would have let them find their way back to their villages to satisfy their wants. Instead of looking to the Lord they looked to circumstances, to the numbers of the people. They did not reckon with Him and His power, who fed Israel for forty years in the wilderness, who sent the ravens to Elijah. Such is unbelief.

How calm and sublime is the Lord's answer. No word of reproof falls from His blessed lips. "But Jesus said to them, They have no need to go; give ye them to eat." There was surely no need to go away empty from Him, no need to go elsewhere and seek what He so plentifully can give and does give to all who trust Him. They have no need to go. In this word He reveals Himself once more as the omnipotent Lord. A desert place, and He declares a crowd of five thousand men, besides women and children, have no need to go, to leave Him, to find bread to satisfy their hunger. But still more, He tells His disciples, "give ye them to eat." This they could not understand. They had very little to minister to the great needs of such a company. That the *Lord* could feed them they had not considered, and that they, in giving them to eat, could count on His power to minister to their need was far from their thoughts. Yet this is the lesson which the Lord wanted to teach them and us likewise. He is the All-sufficient One. He has all power, and there is no need for anyone to go away empty from Him. He wishes to minister to the needs of His people, through His own. "Give ye them to eat" is still His loving word, and He backs it up with all His grace and riches in glory. We mean, of course, all this of a ministry in spiritual things.

Let us think of this as we minister the things of God, whether it be the Gospel or the ministry of His Word, for the edification of believers. All is entrusted to us by the Head of the Body. He Himself will minister through our ministry if the heart rests believingly in Him and faith looks away from circumstances and difficulties to a rich and gracious Lord in Glory. He knows the needs of all. He is still the compassionate One, and as Lord in glory tells His servants: "Give ye them to eat." Oh for faith to count on Him and His gracious power.

And now they speak, "But they say to Him, We have not here save five loaves and two fishes" (verse 17). From the Gospel of John we learn that the Lord said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat? But this He said trying him, for He knew what He was going to do. Philip answered Him, Loaves for two hundred denarii are not sufficient for them, that each may have some little portion. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, says to Him, There is a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes; but this, what is it for so many?" (John vi:5-9). They even had not the small supply themselves, but it was in the hands of a little boy. How suggestive! It was little, very little they possessed, and it was in the hands of a little boy, one who was weak. It is so with ourselves and the little we have. Blessed are we indeed if we do know how little it is which is in our hands and how much is lacking. But let it not be in unbelief, thinking it is such a little bit, which cannot be used. Nothing is too small, nothing too little, if it is brought to Him; yea, He has chosen the weak things. "Bring them here to Me" is His command. What condescension, He does not despise the little we have, He does not set it aside in manifesting His power. How easy it would have been for Him to speak only a word in that desert place and bread would have fallen again upon the ground, for the crowds to gather and take with them. He wishes to use the little, the weak things, to show forth His power. It is the way He works throughout this age, in which He is the Rejected One.

"Bring them here to Me," and do we bring what we have to Him always? Is every service *first* brought to Him for blessing? Is the little put into His hands *first* for blessing? Are all our undertakings really brought to Him; our little, our all, put at His disposal? If we bring it to

Him He will bless it and with His blessing we can go forth to minister to others. There can be and will be no lack in such ministry in dependence upon Him.

This is true ministry. How far Christendom has drifted away from it, and how short we come of it, with our unbelieving hearts. We ever reckon with circumstances and difficulties and not with the loving, gracious and all sufficient Lord in glory! May we learn and profit by His Word.

"And having commanded the multitudes to recline upon the grass, having taken the five loaves and two fishes, He looked up to heaven and blessed; and having broken the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the multitudes" (verses 18, 19). He blessed and broke the bread, and the broken bread is first put into the hands of the disciples, and after they received they gave it to the people. This is the divine order of ministry. The little handed over to Him, He blesses and we receive first of Him, and what we receive from His hands we can pass on to others.*

What a scene it must have been! Five thousand men besides women and children crowding about Him, and at His loving command they lay down upon the grass and after they found rest He feeds them with His bread. In looking upon that blessed picture we think of Him as *Jehovah-Roi,* the Lord, my Shepherd. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." It is fulfilled here. Jehovah, the Shepherd, is present with His people. Jehovah, the Shepherd, gives them rest and then in the green pastures He refreshes

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*In the Gospel of John He Himself feeds with His own hands the crowds. The ministry of the disciples is not mentioned there, because in John He is described as the Divine One.

them. Thus He acts still. Rest and food in Him and through Him are still His precious gifts to all who put their trust in Him. He Himself is our Rest and our Bread. He satisfies the poor with bread. It is prophetic. He will yet be the great Shepherd of Israel and gather His people, His scattered sheep, and supply their wants. We read of it in that restoration Psalm, the one hundred and thirty-second: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread."

"And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was over and above of fragments twelve hand baskets full. But those that had eaten were about five thousand men besides women and children" (verses 20-21). Here is the miracle. The little was not only sufficient for all, but more was left over at the end than they had in the beginning. His blessing was not only upon the little for all, but He blessed it in such a manner that from it came an abundant increase. It is not different now in the ministry of spiritual things. The more we give out, having received from Him, the greater the increase and possession for us in the end.

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Every word here is pregnant with meaning. He compelled the disciples to go on board ship. A change is to take place by His own arrangement and the people are dismissed by Himself. All this indicates the setting aside of Israel, their rejection, though never complete nor final. He Himself goes up into the mountain apart to pray. The whole night is spent by Him there in the presence of the Father. He is absent, both from the crowds and from His disciples, and while the multitudes He had fed scatter, His disciples are tossed upon the sea. In the prophet Hosea we read that Jehovah saith "I will go and return to My place" (Hosea v:15). His going upon the mountain speaks of His withdrawal and the place which He occupies in the presence of the Father, as intercessor and advocate. The third incident recorded, the stormy night, the storm-tossed disciples, the coming Lord in the fourth watch, Peter's separation to meet him, the morning which brings peace and the renewed healing by the returned Lord, all is full of meaning and rich in typical application.

The night is a picture of the time during which He is absent, this present evil age in which we live. His return from the mountain in the morning foreshadows His second coming and the beginning of a new age.

And now we read what happens in that night during His absence. "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves for the wind was contrary" (verse 24). While He is away night and storm reign and His own are in distress, the wind is contrary. Could we find a better description of the present age than a stormy sea, a contrary wind and a dark night? Surely the age is perfectly portrayed by these. It is an age of storm, peril and night. How strange that with the most emphatic as well as plain statements of holy writ concerning the characteristics of this age, the greater part of the professing church can teach precisely the opposite and speak of it as an age of peace, light and progress. Surely Scripture is very definite that Satan is the god of this age, and night increases under his rule; peace is impossible. We find in the very short description of that night in which the Lord was absent, a description of the age. It is true still and the one who believes otherwise and expects peace and calm now will be sadly disappointed.

But if the night, the rising waves, the contrary wind, are pictures of the age, what can the little ship mean, which sails across the storm sea? The applications which are made of the ship are manifold. A favored one is to use it as a type of the church and speak of the disciples as believers who are in the church and who have their fears and doubts, who tremble in view of the towering waves and the contrary wind. But such an application cannot be made to correspond with the teaching of the Word concerning the true church. The true church is above the waters, above the storms, in union with Himself who is in the presence of God. The frightened disciples, full of fears and expecting every moment the deep to swallow them up, could hardly be taken as types of the true believer, who knows his position in Christ. He, too, is above the storm,

and though he may be storm-tossed, as much as this little ship upon the sea, though Satan's power may ever play about him and the wind be contrary, yet through it all does he not fear, but sings the song which is heard above the howling wind, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What does the ship mean? It may be taken in a general way to be a type of the Jewish people. The Lord absent from those who are in a sense His own to whom He came, and who rejected Him, who refused Him, are upon the sea. The sea represents the nations; the waves and the wind, the persecutions and the distress which come upon them. It is an excellent portrayal of the history of God's ancient people from the time they refused their King until He returns to be received by them. This ship with fluttering sails, broken masts, tossed like a ball from wave to wave, blown hither and thither, uncontrollable and *yet* controlled, ever in danger and never in danger of going down —this ship is the type of the Jewish ship, the Jewish nation. It is still upon the sea. It is still the same old storm-tossed vessel. The winds more than ever contrary. It seeks an harbor now, trying to cast anchor on the shore of their own land, but a boisterous wind is coming and while the ship is miraculously kept, there will be no haven, no peace, till He comes again who is their King, the Son of David.

But this application, correct as it is, is too general. We have spoken of the ship and not of the disciples. The disciples must be taken as the type of the Jewish remnant. We saw from the tenth chapter that the disciples sent forth then were representing the Jewish remnant. When the Lord Jesus Christ left the earth and went to the Father's

house to prepare a place, He did not leave a church behind. There was *no* church on the earth when our Lord ascended upon high, and when He comes back to earth again He will not find the church on the earth, but He will come back to be received by the remnant of His earthly people. It is in this light the incident has to be interpreted, which however does not forbid applications in other directions.

"And in the fourth watch of the night He went toward them, walking upon the sea. But when the disciples saw Him walking upon the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear" (verses 25, 26).

He had left His place on the mountain and returned. His return was in the fourth watch of the night, right before the dawning of the morning. And as He left that place on the mountain when He was here in the earth, so will He arise and leave the place on His Father's throne and come back to earth, to the very land where He was once rejected. First, He will leave His place and descend from heaven with a shout and come into the air, where we shall meet Him. The *fourth* watch is the time when He leaves His place and comes. The fourth watch is *now*. The gradual approaching of the Lord, His person seen dimly in the distance, the fear of the disciples who cry out for terror, instead of shouting for joy that He is coming, all finds its proper application. How many there are in Christendom, for whom the coming of the Lord and the events connected with it have no joy, but bring fear and terror to the heart. And these days, the days of the fourth watch, are filled with signs which herald His coming. The true believer, however, knows no fear in the fourth watch, for he waits and watches for His coming, and if it were possible to get a glimpse of the Coming One leaving His Father's throne, descending into the air, the believing heart would rejoice. We love His appearing, and the fact that

He *is* coming but intensifies the longing of the heart to see Him as He is. The believer knows no such fear as the Jewish disciples had, when they saw Him walking on the water. Had they known, it is the Lord, and that He comes to bring peace and safety, we doubt not their cries would have ceased. All has a meaning for the Jewish remnant, which will be on the scene when our glorious hope has been realized.

"But immediately Jesus spake unto them saying, Be of good courage: it is I; be not afraid" (verse 27). These precious, comforting words were heard above the roaring of the hurricane and the noise of many waters. May *we* hear them continually in the midst of increasing difficulties, in the hour of test and trial, in affliction, in the dark valley of suffering and in the experiences we call "disappointments." Blessed are we if we do. The darkest place, even if it is the dungeon, will become illuminated and resound with joyous praise. Surely Paul in Rome must have heard these precious words, "Be of good courage—it is I—be not afraid!" May we take all from His hands by believing we *are* in His hands and thus face every trial, every tempest, with the assurance that there is nothing to be feared.

But in the ship, in that company is one who recognizes the voice, one who recognizes Him through the mist of the storm and the vanishing shadows of the night. And Peter answered and said: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter having descended from the ship, walked on the waters to go to Jesus." Here another significant type is before us. We shall soon learn from this Gospel that the Lord announces the building of His church. In the sixteenth chapter we find the words, "Upon this rock I will build My church." We learn that it was Peter who said,

"Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," and upon this rock, Christ in resurrection, the Lord announces His church *will* be built. To Peter also the keys of the kingdom were committed, and how he could use them we find in the book of Acts. Now church means "out-calling," not only an outcalling from the nations, but an outcalling from that which is passed, the Jewish things. Peter, so prominent in this incident, in his act of faith in leaving the ship, turning his back upon his frightened kinsmen, stepping on the waters, going to Jesus to meet Him, stands as a type for the church. It is true all the truth concerning the church was revealed through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is true, through Paul the company was led forth out of the ship to go forth to meet the Coming One, but Peter also stands in his action typically for these truths, which we have later so fully revealed in the Pauline epistles.

It is separation, and this separation was an act of faith which we see here. It is the true position of the church, as well as the individual believer. The old Jewish ship is to be left behind. The path for the church is the path of faith. The object before the church is the coming Lord. The word from Him is, Come. The walk to be like His walk. He has triumphed over sin and death, the world and Satan; the waves and storms cannot harm nor hinder Him. And we are associated with Him. He wants us to walk on the water. This is the calling of the church. Separation first unto Him. Obedience to His Word and then walking on the water to meet Him.

Alas! where is it now, this church separated, gone out to meet the Bridegroom? That which calls itself church is a miserable ship, *worse* than the Jewish ship after which the modern "church" is only too often modeled. As individual believers, however, separation is possible. *You*, dear reader, in the midst of all the confusion and failure, in this

fourth watch, you may hear His voice, "Come." He is coming. He wants you to take the path of faith, the path He walked Himself. "Behold the Bridegroom! Go ye out to meet Him!" Have you gone out to meet Him?

"But seeing the wind boisterous, He was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

All is again pregnant with meaning.

What made Peter sink after he stepped out so boldly and walked on the stormy waves to meet his Lord? It was a boisterous wind; and Peter, instead of looking to Jesus only, was frightened by that boisterous wind and began to sink. Has this not been repeated in our own experience? We heard His voice, we separated ourselves, we followed Him, and then the enemy raised some boisterous wind. He always does when we desire to follow the Lord in all things. Oh, how often we made the same mistake which Peter made! Looking away from the Coming One, the One who is able to save to the uttermost, our feet began to sink and to slip back. But could Peter ever have sunk down? Never! Nor can the believer ever perish. But Jesus lifted Peter up, and he stood again on the waves, triumphing now through His power over the boisterous wind, and then he walked not towards Jesus, but he walked with Jesus. Even so He deals with us in His great mercy, never leaving nor forsaking us, saving us out of the tempestuous sea.

How beautifully this fits into the dispensational picture we have already given. There is a time coming when Satan will bring on a very boisterous wind. It is called the "hour of temptation" in Revelation. That old serpent is even now getting ready for it. But the Lord will never let

His own sink. Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught Peter. He takes him by the hand, and both go now to the ship. So will He catch up His waiting church, and will return with His saints to bring peace.

And as they came into the ship the wind ceased. Satan's power was at an end as soon as Jesus was in the ship. When He comes back to earth again there will be peace, and not before. The great need of the world is to have the King back. What a glorious picture that must have been—Jesus and Peter coming to the ship! The sun was now shedding the first rays over the sea, the dark night was over, the anxiety of the little flock was turned into joy and laughter, while the raging sea became as calm and smooth as if there had never been a storm. How much grander it will be when the Lord comes back with His saints, and the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings!

"Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying: Truly, Thou art the Son of God."

It seems they had never believed this. The great stumbling block with the Jew is yet, "He made Himself God." Again and again we are being asked by them, "Can God have a Son?" Many of the Jews acknowledge Jesus to-day as a reformer and a good man, but never as Son of God. They will know Him when He comes, and the nation will fall at His pierced feet and worship Him as the King and Son of the Living God.

The closing verses of the fourteenth chapter of Matthew speak of Jesus going to the opposite shore, where He healed the diseased. "And when they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had recognized Him, they sent in all that region round about, and they brought unto Him all that were sick. And they besought Him that they might only touch the hem of

His garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." It happened in the place where they had rejected Him. This may be taken as a true type of the blessed work of redemption, salvation and restoration which will take place during the millennium.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter introduces us more fully into the events which follow the rejection of the King by His people and which manifest the enmity, the satanic hatred against the Lord. He has now set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem and soon He will reveal His sufferings; His death, His resurrection and His return to earth. While going on steadily towards the cross, which was ever before Him, that departure He should accomplish in Jerusalem, the enemies swarm around Him, they test Him and bring their questions, but He silences them all. The wisdom of Him who *is* wisdom Himself is gloriously manifested. At last the tempting and accusing scribes and Pharisees have spent their last arrow upon Him. He asks them a question which they could not answer (chapter xxii). He then reveals their wickedness and hatred of Him and pronounces His "woes" upon them followed by His last word to Jerusalem (chapter xxiii). But while these evil men with their evil hearts, under the leadership of Satan, approach the Lord from time to time, He also teaches His disciples and utters parables all in harmony with the scope of the entire gospel. We shall fully show this as we continue in our exposition.

"*Then* the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem come up to Jesus, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress what has been delivered by the ancients, for they do not wash their hands when they eat bread?" (v. 1, 2).

We can easily learn from this that behind this deputation from the religious Jerusalem stood the whole company of Pharisees and scribes, and that it was a cunningly devised

and concerted attempt to ensnare Him. The Lord in answer asks them another question and lays bare their wicked hypocrisies, after which He addresses the people and answers Peter's question. Before we follow these events a more detailed explanation of the question of the Pharisees and scribes is in order.

We are aware that the two questions, the one by the Pharisees and the other, the Lord's counter question in the beginning of the fifteenth chapter, are not fully grasped by many readers of the Word. The Jews believed and still believe (at least, the orthodox) in a *written* law and in an *oral* law. This they founded upon Exodus xxxiv:27 and taught that while Moses wrote down a law another oral law was given to him and that this oral law was handed down from generation to generation. It is believed by them that Moses received both the written and the oral law on Mount Sinai. They placed the oral law above the written law.* Circumstances, however, forced them to commit the oral law to writing, which was done in the *Talmud* (meaning doctrine), from which we can learn all the ridiculous paraphrases and wicked additions to the law the ancients had made under the plea that it was given by God. To illustrate what interpretation they put upon certain statements of the law we select Exodus xxxiv:26: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." The oral law has expounded this to mean that it is a sin to eat meat and drink milk at the same time, and the elders have gone so far as to declare, if a pot of milk boils over and some of the milk drops into a pot of meat, the meat is unclean and must be thrown away. Butter, coming from milk, is likewise not to be eaten with meat, etc.

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*The words of the scribes are lovely above the words of the law; for the words of the law are light and weighty, but the words of the scribes are all weighty.—*Beracoth.*

Such a question these tempting scribes and Pharisees brought to the Lord. It is the question about the washing of the hands. It will interest the reader to learn a little more about this unscriptural act and what emphasis the Pharisees and the present day talmudical Jews lay upon the washing of hands.

Nothing whatever is said about such washing of hands in the Old Testament scriptures, but the oral law has precept upon precept upon this ceremony, which, if neglected, is looked upon as a great sin, worthy of excommunication. One even was permitted to eat unclean meats, forbidden in the law, and drink unclean drinks, as long as he fulfilled the traditions of the elders and washed his hands before he broke the law. The Pharisaical righteousness consisted in this: "Whosoever hath his place in the land of Israel, and eateth his common food in cleanness, and speaks the holy language, and recites his prayers morning and evening, let him be confident that he obtains the life of the world to come." Volumes were written and are in existence which enlarge in the most critical and minutest way upon the washing of hands. Dissertations we find here on the simple washing and the plunging into water, on the manner of the washing, what hand is to be washed first, the time when it is to be done, the quantity of water to be used, and many other rules. Besides this we find the grossest superstitions. We read some years ago in a jargon book, published in Poland, that evil spirits light upon the hands over night and if the hands are not washed as prescribed by the oral law these evil spirits find their way into the mouth and stomach of the transgressor and defile him.*

*This is undoubtedly founded upon the following talmudical statement: "Shibta is an evil spirit which sits upon man's hands at night. If any touch his food with unwashed hands, that spirit sits upon that food, and there is danger from it."

But enough of this. Such were and are the traditions of the elders. The Lord might have easily dismissed the question of the Jerusalem deputation by telling them that their oral law is invalid, but He aims at something higher. He aims at their conscience and uncovers their true condition. With His divine wisdom He has the answer ready which will completely shut their mouths.

"But He answering said to them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God on account of your traditional teaching?" For God commanded saying: "Honor father and mother; and he that speaks ill of father and mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift (*corban*) whatsoever it be by which received from me thou wouldst be profited; and he shall in no wise honor his father or his mother; and ye have made void the commandment of God on account of your traditional teaching" (v. 3-6).

The great lesson from this is the fact which our Lord makes so prominent, that traditional teachings lead to the transgressing of God's commandment and make it void. This is true in every case. If we look upon religious Christendom with its traditions and man made rules and institutions, we find ample proof of it and could illustrate it in many ways. The one who follows the traditions of Christendom most, finds himself soon in Rome and then in out and out opposition to God's revealed will and purpose, and he who has nothing at all to do with traditional teachings and rejects them altogether is in submission to the Word of God and looks to it as his only authority.

Surely ritualistic Christendom, the so-called religious world, is the *direct offspring of Phariseeism.* Its traditions, lent, holidays, man made ministry and many invented ceremonies, have superseded the Word of God and made it of non-effect. We could easily digress here and enlarge upon

this thought. We leave it to the reader to make the application. But think of the awful sin, dear reader, that men can dare to set aside with their own inventions and traditional teachings the very Word of God, eternally settled in the heavens! This has been done, and God will judge Christendom for it in His own time. The Pharisees had no room for the Christ of God; they hated Him. Modern Phariseeism may talk of a Christ and use His name; it rejects the Christ, His person and His work.

The Lord, to uncover the hypocrisy of the Pharisees with their traditions, refers to the commandment which demands the child to honor father and mother. To this Jewish tradition had added, "A son is bound to provide his father meat and drink, to clothe him, to cover him, to lead him in and out, to wash his face, hands and feet.. A son is bound to nourish his father, yea, to beg for him."* But with all this strictness tradition had found a way how to avoid this obligation. A person had only to say "corban"—a gift, something dedicated to the temple or a vow of personal obligation, and the son was completely released from any duty towards his father and mother.

"And so stringent was the ordinance that it is expressly stated that such a vow was binding, even if what was voiced involved a breach of the law. It cannot be denied that *such vows in regard to parents* would be binding, and were actually made. Indeed, the question is discussed in the *Mishnah,* in so many words, whether "honor of father and mother" constituted a ground for invalidating a vow, and decided on the negative against a solitary dissenting voice. And if doubt should still exist, a case is related in the Mishnah, in which a father was thus shut out by the vow of

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*Kiddushim.

his son from anything by which he might be profited by him."*

And now follows the righteous word of condemnation by Him who searches the hearts of men. "Hypocrites! well has Esaias prophesied about you, saying, This people honor Me with the lips, but their heart is far away from Me; but in vain do they worship Me, teaching as teachings commandments of men" (v. 8, 9).

The same verdict He pronounces upon the religious world, modern Phariseeism. There is much talk of worship and approaching God—the Lord has only one word for the whole thing, "Hypocrites"! May we through the rich grace of God be delivered from Phariseeism in any shape or form and keep delivered. It will need great heart-searching and self-judgment.

"And having called to Him the crowd, He said to them, Hear and understand. Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what goes forth out of the mouth, this defiles the man" (v. 10, 11). Without fear, which He never knew, He declares publicly the evil teachings of the sayings of the elders. Simple truth, indeed, and yet how many who are *professing* Christians have not hold of the very first principle, that the evil is within which defiles the man.

Of course the Pharisees were offended. It lowered their dignity with the common people. They looked upon themselves as the leaders of the people and here, after so strongly proving the contrary teachings of traditions, He corrects in a few simple words the errors of the Pharisees.

"Then His disciples coming up said to Him, Dost thou know that the Pharisees, having heard this word, have been offended? But He answering said, Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Leave

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*See Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah."

them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind; but if blind lead blind, both will fall into a ditch" (v. 12-14). These words not alone show the doom of the Jewish Pharisees, but they speak also of the doom of that which His heavenly Father has not planted—Christendom. It will be rooted up and then cast out with its boasted leaders, who are but leaders of the blind.

But even the disciples did not understand His plain and simple language. Peter calls that which was plain teaching "a parable."

"And Peter answering to Him said, Expound to us this parable. But He said, Are ye also without intelligence? Do ye not apprehend that everything that enters into the mouth finds its way into the belly, and is cast forth into the draught? but the things which go forth out of the mouth come out of the heart and these defile men. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessings, blasphemies; these are the things which defile man, but the eating with unwashed hands does not defile man" (v. 15-20). How slow they were to understand the full meaning of what He wanted to convey to their hearts. Our Lord shows the true source of all defilement. It is within. The Pharisees did not believe in the utter corruption of the heart. "I the Lord search the heart" (Jer. xvii:10). And this searcher of hearts is present here on the scene and throws His own light upon the source of evil, of which He had said through Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Blessed is he who bows before this verdict.

The incident which follows is in closest connection and fullest harmony with all this inasmuch as it reveals deliverance from the evil which is within.

The first part showed us how the Lord tore down the mask from the Pharisees and uncovered the human heart.

"All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The One who uncovers here and knoweth the heart, desperately wicked, the Heart-searcher, is the same who called in Eden, "Adam, where art thou?" What else are the religious observances, the traditions of men, than miserable fig leaves to conceal the nakedness of the sinner! But He stripped off these fig leaves, He removed the covering and aimed at the conscience. His divine light revealed the darkness and defilement within. Blessed is the man who puts himself in that light and lets that light uncover and undo him!

The Holy Spirit now connects with the manifestation of Christ as the One who uncovers the heart another incident. It is the Syrophœnician woman and the healing of her daughter. If we have in the first part of this chapter the manifestation of Jehovah, who reveals, we find in the second part Jehovah revealed, who covers and delivers His poor, naked and needy creature. The blessed story before us is the full revelation of the loving heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And Jesus going forth from thence, went away into parts of Tyre and Sidon." He left the religious Pharisees with their hypocrisies and deceitful dealings. He turns His back upon all, and chooses for His path a country where religious observances were unknown, where sin and misery held sway. How significant once more! A foreshadowing again of what should happen soon: the Gospel to be sent to the Gentiles. And now we read of her who is the object of His divine compassion, and through her the Lord manifests His rich grace and power to deliver from evil.

"And lo, a Canaanitish woman, coming out from those borders, cried to Him, saying, Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is miserably possessed by a demon. But He did not answer her a word."

Assuredly He knew her and her need, her struggles and her faith, and as He went through Samaria on account of that one soul who came to the well, so here He enters these parts to meet the needy one and deliver her. His heart is all for her, and His divine love and desire is toward her. But who is this miserable, crying woman, with her face marred by suffering, lifting her imploring eyes to Him in whom she recognized her Deliverer? She is a Canaanitish woman, or, as she is also called on account of her living in that country, a Syrophœnician. She belongs to a race which is cursed. The Caananite was to perish. Israel was called to carry out the divine sentence. She directs her prayer for help to Him as *Son of David*. Perhaps she had heard of Him by that name, and how He, the Son of David, drove out demons, healed the sick and raised the dead. Faith she possesses, and faith casts itself upon Him, trusting in His power and willingness to help. But had she a *claim* upon Him, the Son of David? Had she a promise anywhere that the Son of David would come and deliver and heal a Canaanitish woman? No, not one. For the Canaanite is no hope held out in connection with Israel's Messiah. When at last the Son of David has taken His place upon the throne of His father David, the Canaanite will have been driven out of the land (Joel iii:17; Zech. xiv:21). For this reason He did not answer her a word. If He had opened His lips it could have only been to speak with the authority of the Son of David, and that would have meant her doom. But nevertheless is His heart full of grace and sympathy for her. He who read the hearts of the proud Pharisees reads her heart too, knows her state and that faith will triumph. So He answered her not a word. In that silence was hidden all His rich Grace towards her. It told her: You have no claim on Me as Son of David; you have no promise to claim Me as David's Son. In calling Him

"Son of David" she claimed what was not hers. He wants her to know that she is to come with no claim, as one stripped of all. This is the gracious object before Him in being silent to her pitiful cries.

We next hear the voice of the disciples. "And His disciples came to Him and asked Him, saying, Dismiss her, for she cries after us." They did not suggest that her request should be granted. Perhaps they meant it by their expressed desire, "Dismiss her." Had they not seen multitudes healed? Did they not see the blind, the deaf and dumb, the fever-stricken and the infirm press around Him, and He had healed them all? The centurion with his sick servant, too, was a Gentile, and now they ask Him to dismiss her. How little they knew of His ways. He could not dismiss her *without* the blessing she craved. He could not give her the blessing she wanted as long as she appealed to Him as Son of David, laying claim to that to which she had no right.

"But He answering said, I have not been sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

His answer was not only meant for the imploring disciples but it was meant for her. He speaks, of course, as Son of David. And oh! how wonderful is this word, though it has often been declared as harsh. He puts her, so to speak, in the right path to receive the blessing. It is one little word around which all is centered. The little word is *"lost."* He gave her thus to understand He had come for the *lost* sheep of the house of Israel; and if they were lost and needed a Saviour, how much more she, a Canaanitish woman? And it is this word, lost, which faith lays hold upon, and through which she is enabled to draw near and ask His help simply as a needy one. "But she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me." She has understood; her heart grasped the meaning. She fully realized

her place outside of the commonwealth of Israel, and because she knows it she drops His title, Son of David. With this she declared, "I have no claim upon His mercy." *But she came.* Yes, she came into his divine presence, and worshipping she falls at his feet with a cry of need, "Lord help me." She has taken her place before Him, and casts herself upon Him with all her need. "Lord help me"—what a blessed prayer it is!

And that she had taken the true place in which He, the Son of God, could bless her, is soon to be brought out. Her faith is to be tested—to pass through the fire. He knew her; He knew the answer she would give, and in testing her He points out the way to Himself and to the blessing once more. Oh! how gracious and tender He is! And still He deals with the soul in the same tender and loving way.

"But He answering said, It is not well to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs." What would she say to this? A dog—a Gentile—the bread for the children! Is her faith truly paired with humility (and true faith *always is*) to stand this word? Does she really know herself as such an unworthy outcast? Before we read her answer let us glance at the word "dogs." The word used by our Lord is a diminutive; it really means *"little dogs."* It denotes the dogs which enter the house to find something to eat there and not the homeless animals which roam through Oriental villages. In the use of this word she understands once more His readiness and willingness to bless her. And so He led her down, deeper and deeper, and as He leads her down her hope becomes brighter and brighter. Thus He deals with the soul which seeks His help.

But now faith bursts forth in all its fragrance. Crushed she lays before Him, the Lord. Tenderly His eyes must

have rested upon His poor creature. Her appeal to the Son of David was hushed, her need and help, her expectation from Him alone, and now the word which had crushed her still more and yet which holds out to her the brightest promise.

Listen to her answer as it comes from her trembling heart and lips, "Yea, Lord, for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their master." She admits it all. She has nothing to answer back. She assents to it: "Yea, Lord." Thou art right! But faith rises higher. She takes His word in her lips, "the dogs"—the little dogs—"eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their master." The little dogs are cared for and in the confession of being one of these little dogs she claims from Mercy's hands a few crumbs. She has conquered. Once more greater faith is found than in Israel. And now He speaks the Word which must have filled her with praise: "O, woman, great is thy faith; be it to thee as thou desirest. And her daughter was healed from that very hour." But how it all must have refreshed His heart—the heart of the rejected One—moving on towards the cross!

However, while we learn the way of grace and spiritual lessons from these events, let us not forget the dispensational phase of it. The first part of this chapter (verses 1-20) stands for the apostasy of Israel and Israel set aside. The incident of the Canaanitish woman stands typically for the call of the Gentiles and Salvation going forth to them. The third part of the chapter reveals the dispensation to come: the Kingdom age.

"And Jesus going away from thence came towards the sea of Galilee, and He went up into the mountain and sat down there. And great crowds came to Him, having with them lame, blind, dumb, crippled and many others, and they cast them at His feet, and He healed them; so that

the crowds wondered, seeing dumb speaking, crippled sound, lame walking, and blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. But Jesus having called His disciples to Him said, I have compassion on the crowd, because they have stayed with Me already three days and they have not anything that they can eat, and I would not send them away fasting lest they should faint on the way. And His disciples say to Him, Whence should we have so many loaves in the wilderness as to satisfy so great a crowd? And Jesus says to them, How many loaves have ye? But they said, Seven and a few small fishes. And He commanded the crowds to lie down on the ground; and having taken the seven loaves and the fishes, and having given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples and His disciples to the crowd. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was over and above of the fragments seven baskets full; but they that ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And having dismissed the crowds, He went on board ship and came to the borders of Magadan."

Here, then, we have once more a foreshadowing of the coming age. The God of Israel is glorified, which will not come to pass in the earth until the King comes back and establishes His kingdom. Then it shall be, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth." The feeding of the *second* crowd of people has the same meaning. Three days they were with Him and on the third day He fed them miraculously. As we have shown elsewhere, the third day stands always for resurrection and the completion. The *seven* loaves and *seven* baskets of fragments teach us the same lessons.

CHAPTER XVI.

After the wonderful manifestation of Jehovah among His people, in the healing of the great multitudes and the feeding of the four thousand men, besides women and children, the Pharisees appear again upon the scene, and this time with the Sadducees to tempt Him.

"And the Pharisees and Sadducees came and asked Him, tempting Him, to shew them a sign out of heaven" (verse 1). The Pharisees were the strictest sect among the Jews. They were the religious class, the Ritualists who not alone held to the letter of the law, but who enforced the traditional teachings. They were hypocrites, and fully exposed as such by our Lord in the previous chapter. There He uncovered the hypocrisies and the wickedness of their hearts. Once before the Pharisees and the scribes had come to Him with their subtle cunning and asked to see a sign from Him (chapter xii:38). The scribes were in fullest sympathy with the Pharisees, being as religious and ritualistic as they were. These scribes had the care of the written law and studied it. They made the transcripts, expounded the law, explained difficulties, kept the records and were also called lawyers.

The Sadducees were the very opposite from the Pharisees and the scribes. The Pharisees hated the Sadducees, and the Sadducees were the sworn enemies of the Pharisees. Sadduceeism was the reaction of Phariseeism. It was a reform movement, and as such (like all reform) a big failure. The Sadducees were Freethinkers, Rationalists. They denied the supernatural. Up to this chapter they are

mentioned only once before. In the third chapter we read that the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to the Baptism of John. We can well imagine how the Pharisee, when he saw a Sadducee on the road out to the wilderness, would gather his long, flowing robe around himself for fear that the hem of his garment would become defiled by brushing up against that unrighteous Sadducee, while the Sadducee had nothing but looks of scorn and hatred for his brother. John greeted them with the title which belongs to them both, "Offspring of vipers!"

Now, here in the beginning of the sixteenth chapter, this event happens, the Pharisees and Sadducees agree together to tempt the Lord. Both make a common cause in opposing the Lord. Most likely they came together in Conference. Well could they meet together, though outwardly separated, yet inwardly possessed by the same satanic hatred against Him, whose words had so completely unmasked Phariseeism and whose deeds and mightly miracles had so perfectly exposed the fallacy of Sadduceeism. While they could not agree in doctrine and practice in one thing they could agree and were perfectly harmonious, and this was, the hatred and rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as before indicated in our exposition of this Gospel, these Pharisees and Sadducees, these sects among the professing earthly people of God in the past, are perfectly reproduced in the professing sphere of Christendom. The modern "Christian" Phariseeism is the religious, ritualistic part of Christendom, having a *name* to live but being dead, the *form* of godliness, but denying its power. Sadduceeism in its "Christian" aspect is the liberal current so strong in our day, the new theology which puts supernaturalism out of the way, the higher critics who deny the inspiration of the Bible, beginning with the denial of the written Word and rapidly ending with the denial of the living Word. And these two great

parts of Christendom, modern Phariseeism and Sadduceeism are opposing the Person and the Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The day is not far off when there will be a *great union* of Christendom, a union which will take in the most ritualistic and the most liberal, a union which will also include the reform Jew and which will aim at a universal religion founded upon that anti-Christian doctrine of "a Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of men." All this is seen approaching by the modern drift of things throughout Christendom. This union to come will be upon the ground of opposing the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement He made on the Cross. That coming union will be "the devil's millennium." When the Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time He will find that monstrosity fully developed in the earth.

And thus they came asking a sign out of Heaven. Before it was only "asking a sign of Him." But now it was to be a sign out of Heaven. Perhaps the Sadducees had asked this and the Pharisees were well satisfied. He had done many signs among them and He Himself, God manifested in the flesh, was the Sign, and now they desire a sign. Would they have believed if He had given them a sign? Supposing He had with His omnipotent power opened the Heavens and shown out of Heaven with the rays of glory; what would have been the effect upon their unbelieving hearts? Would they have bowed in worship before Him? We believe not. The Sadducees, with a sneer, would have explained it as a phenomenon of nature. They do it so now. During a visit to California a brother told us how the leading preacher of a certain city, a "Congregationalist," had told his hearers that it was a stroke of lightning which fell upon the sacrifice of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. And the Pharisees would have only blasphemed the more. They would

have repeated their previous blasphemy in saying that the sign was given through Beelzebub's power. Indeed, the ritualistic, Jewish fanatic believes to this day that our Lord did His miracles through the mysterious and unlawful use of the Holy Name. A sign out of Heaven! Infidelity still demands it occasionally through its disciples. "If some one came back from the 'other world' we would believe," persons have often told us. But would they believe? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, not even if one rise from the dead will they be persuaded" (Luke xvi:31). That awful delusion "Spiritualism" with its satanic abominations has for a bait that ridiculous assertion, "the evidence of a future life, the demonstration and sign of a hereafter," and many have been ensnared by these demon doctrines. No signs any more; the Sign of all signs has come, Christ Himself. But a sign will yet come, the sign of the Son of Man followed by the Manifestation of Himself out of Heaven. Of this we shall hear more in the closing verses of this chapter.

"But He answering said to them, When evening is come, ye say, Fine weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, A storm to-day, for the sky is red and lowering; ye know how to discern the face of the sky, but ye cannot the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it, save the sign of Jonas. And He left them and went away" (v. 2-4).

They understood the signs of nature, the warnings of the coming storm and the harbingers of a beautiful day. The Jews in general closely observed the seasons and signs in nature.* All the changes in nature they observed, but the

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*"In the going out of the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, all observed the rising of the smoke. If the smoke bended northward, the poor rejoiced, but the rich were troubled; because there would be much rain the following year and the fruits would be corrupted;

signs of the times they did not discern. They were blinded to these. If their eyes had been open they would surely have known that a great change of seasons in another realm than nature had come. They could have seen the evidences of a fast approaching judgment upon the apostate nation and likewise the blessed evidences of the visitation from on High, by the Presence of the Lord, which had taken place.

And is professing Christendom less blind? Alas; almost everything is discerned and studied, the records of the past, the history of Christendom, everything else except the signs of the times. This strange, unscriptural *optimism,* by which Christendom closes wilfully the eyes, so as not to see the signs of an approaching crisis, this false cry of "Peace and Safety," is indeed blindness as great, perhaps greater, than the blindness of those who asked a sign of the Lord.

But thanks be to God, not all are blinded, but many do discern the signs of the times and know "the morning cometh, but also the night."

They were "a wicked and adulterous generation;" this solved the whole problem *why* they could not discern the signs of the times. The sign of the Prophet Jonas was to be the only sign they were to receive and that refers us to the death and resurrection of our Lord.

"He left them and departed." Significant words as well as a symbolical action once more.

"And when His disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. And Jesus said to them, See and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, Because

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if it bended southward, the poor grieved and the rich rejoiced, for there would be fewer rains that year, and the fruit would be sound; if eastward, all rejoiced; if westward, all were troubled." From Talmud, Bal. Ioma.—*Horae Hebraeicae.*

we have taken no bread. And Jesus knowing said, Why reason ye among yourselves, O ye of little faith, because ye have taken no bread? Do ye not yet understand nor remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many hand baskets ye took up? nor the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How do ye not understand that it was not concerning bread I said to you, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Then they comprehended that He did not speak to them to beware of the leaven of bread but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (verses 5-12). Here the slowness of heart and the unbelief of the disciples stands exposed. The Lord turns to His own, right after He had turned His back upon these enemies, and He warns now that even His disciples, believers, are to beware of the terrible leaven of Ritualism and Rationalism. How significant that after He left the offspring of vipers and *before* He unfolds the truths concerning the church which was to be built, He warns to beware of the leaven and its pernicious work and effect. At no time perhaps is this warning to be heeded so much as in the times we live.

But they understood Him not. They thought of the bread which perishes and even then unbelief was mixed with it. Instead of being occupied with Christ Himself and spiritual things they minded earthly things and so He had to tell them in plain words that He did not speak of the leaven of bread, but of that which leaven typifies, the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

What follows now after the warning words of our Lord is one of the most important sections of this Gospel. Around the contents of the second half of the sixteenth chapter cluster indeed the most vital and solemn doctrines. We approach, therefore, the exposition of this part with much prayer, that His Word may be made very plain to every

reader and all may learn the lessons which are put before us.

We find the Lord and His disciples in Cæsarea-Philippi, and there He asks His disciples what men say concerning Himself. After the disciples had answered He turns to them with the same question and Simon Peter gives that wonderful answer upon which the Lord announces the fact of the future building of His church, as well as His coming suffering, death and resurrection. Before we begin the study of these events in detail we wish to say that only in Matthew do we find the full answer to Peter's confession and the fact brought out that the Lord is to have a church. The other Gospel records do not mention these words at all. The Holy Spirit put them here in this dispensational Gospel because there it is where they belong. He, as the writer of this Gospel, is like a goldsmith who has numerous precious stones and pearls, each a costly gem in itself, and forms them in a perfect chain. He arranges all in His divine order, in perfect beauty, to work out and show forth the perfection and worth of the Lord. And so He put the events before us into the very heart of the Gospel of the King.

"But when Jesus was come into the parts of Cæsarea-Philippi, He demanded of His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some, John the Baptist; and others Elias; and others, again, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (verses 14, 15).

It is significant that this takes place in Cæsarea-Philippi. It is on Gentile ground, so to speak, where it happens and where on the one hand it is demonstrated once more that His own had not received Him; and on the other, He is truly confessed and His revelation concerning the church is made known.

In putting the question to His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" He knew, of course, per-

fectly well what men said of Him, for He knows all things. Nor does He include in this question those proud and evil Pharisees with their blasphemies, but He means the multitudes who had followed Him, the men who had listened to His words and who had seen His miracles. The answer they give Him, the echo of the different voices in Israel, proves only too well that they knew Him not. John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the prophets, these were the estimates of Him who is God manifested in the flesh. And is not this yet the burning and important question, "Who is He? What think ye of Christ?" It is still so, and the attacks of the enemy are ever aimed at the person of the Lord. The answer is a manifestation of the unbelief of His earthly people Israel, and this unbelief which became more and more evident indicated the setting aside of Israel. So it is likewise at the end of this Christian age. The ever increasing denial of the Deity of Christ and of His Glory, as it is going on in that which claims His name, Christendom, is the forerunner of judgment. (2 Pet. ii.)

But now the Lord turns to His own. "He says to them, But ye, who do ye say that I am? And Simon Peter answering, said to Him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The question was addressed to the disciples, but Peter answers as the representative of the disciples, and is also the mouthpiece of the Father, whose revelation has come to his heart. But what does this confession mean and what does it all include? It includes more than the prophetic statements contained in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Deity of the Messiah, that He is the Mighty God, Immanuel. It is more than the expression of faith in the prophecies and the fulfilment of them in the person of Him who was standing in their midst. The confession is *personal* faith in the Christ, the Son of the *living* God, and as such He had been revealed unto Peter

by the Father, and Peter, knowing Him as the eternal life, realizing Him as the one who hath life and who imparts life, gives utterance to it. The confession goes beyond the cross and the grave and shows forth Christ the Son of God in resurrection, though Peter had not the full grasp of this when he spoke. It includes all that, realized in personal faith, of which the Lord speaks of in the Gospel of John. "For even as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son also to have life in Himself," * * * and that which precedes this statement in John v, "Verily, verily I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live." But all is, of course, in anticipation of His resurrection from the dead, as we read in the Epistle to the Romans, "marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. i:4).

And thus Peter's confession includes all upon which personal faith in the Son of God rests. The first Epistle Peter wrote by the Spirit of God shows forth the word "living" in connection with the resurrection of Christ. There we read of "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead," and "the living and abiding Word of God," and the Lord is termed "a living Stone," while believers are "living stones." The confession of Him by Peter, through the Father's revelation, is then something altogether new. It denotes a new departure and is the very opposite from Israel's unbelief. How it must have delighted His heart, when for the first time the full truth concerning Himself comes forth from human lips as the result of divine revelation! And now He is ready and free to give as the Son of the living God a new revelation. He is now giving a glimpse of what is going to be and He speaks of that mystery hidden in former ages, the church or assembly, which He calls "My church."

"And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens. And I, also, I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church (assembly), and hades' gates shall not prevail against it" (verses 17, 18).

The blessedness of Peter is announced first, a blessedness which is equally upon each sinner who believes in the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Bar Jona," as the Lord calls Simon, means "son of a dove," and the dove is the emblem and type of the Holy Spirit. Flesh and blood could not produce such a revelation and such faith, it was the work of the Father; and upon this He, the Son, speaks, *"I* also, *I* say unto thee * * * " So in the event before us we have the Father mentioned as well as the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With His own divine authority the Lord now speaks to Simon. Simon Bar Jona receives a new name. Thou art Peter. The Greek word Petros means "a stone;" and then the Lord gives the declaration of the building of His assembly upon this rock. The new revelation is concerning His church. The word "ecclesia" is found here for the first time in the Bible. It means literally "to call out," and denotes an assembly of persons. It would be much better if the word assembly could be substituted for the word "church," as that term is so much misused. By speaking of "my church" the Lord indicates what he is going to do with those who, like Peter, with a God-given faith, confess Him as the Son of the living God. They are to form His church, one great assembly.

This passage containing the word "church" for the first time, and the Lord intimating that it is still a thing of the future, should be sufficient in itself to clear up all the unscriptural views held and taught throughout Christendom about the "church."

The Lord's speaking of the church as *to be built* upon this rock makes it clear that there was no church in existence up to that time. It is therefore all wrong to speak, as it is done so often, of the Old Testament church. There was no such institution in Old Testament times. It is altogether unknown on the pages of the Old Testament prophetic Word. There are, of course, types which indicate that a church was to be called into existence and which *we* now understand after God's hidden secret has been made known. We remember some years ago, after giving an address on the church, how a number of brethren took exception to our statement that there was no church in the Old Testament. The argument they brought was from Stephen's address in Acts vii, where it speaks of "the church in the wilderness," and because this referred to Israel these brethren took it for granted that Israel was the church of Christ in the wilderness. What havoc and confusion such a view produces and leads to! All the sad conditions about us in Christendom originate from the prevailing ignorance of what the church is. The miserable method of applying promises made to God's earthly people Israel to the church, and forcing the fulfilment of them into this present age, has its starting point from the same misconception.

Now if the term "church in the wilderness" is mentioned in the Book of Acts, it simply means "a congregation, an assembly of people in the wilderness," and such was Israel. The word "ecclesia" church is likewise used in Acts xix:32. The mob there is called "ecclesia," but, unlike Acts vii:38, the translators used the word assembly instead of "church."

However, the emphasis here is upon the word *"my."* He is going to have an assembly of people, a church; this out-called people is for Himself. The formation of His assembly could only begin after the work of redemption had been accomplished. He had first to suffer and die, to be raised

from the dead and by it become Lord and Christ, to be received up into Glory and the Holy Spirit sent down, ere the building of His assembly could begin. Therefore He says here, "I will build my church;" not I am building it now, or it has been building since Adam's day, but "I *will* build." Get this clearly settled in your mind and the fuller revelation about the church, the body and bride of Christ, her heavenly calling, heavenly relationship, heavenly hope and heavenly destiny, will soon be understood. And the gates of hades, death, cannot prevail against it because He whose is the church and who builds it has prevailed over death and has annulled him, who has the power of death, that is the devil.

This fuller revelation we do not find here. This is not the place for it. Nor do we find the full truth concerning the church revealed on the day of Pentecost. If Peter were the rock, a statement we shall follow closely, the rock upon which the church is built, we could surely expect that on that wonderful day, when the Spirit was poured out, Peter in his preaching would refer to himself and to the church. But he uses the word "church" not once in his address. When at last all is to be brought out and that mystery hidden in former ages is to be made known, the Lord does not commit these truths at all to Peter, but he chooses another instrument to whom He intrusts His secrets, Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Through Paul the full revelation of the assembly, the one body, is given.

As it is so well known, Roman Catholicism founds upon the Lord's words to Peter the assertion of Peter's supremacy, and as an outflow from this the Papacy. Peter, according to the poor Romanist, is the stone upon which the church is built, and the infallibility of the church is claimed from the words "hades' gate shall not prevail against it."

What then does the Lord mean when He says, "Thou art

Peter and upon *this rock* will I build my assembly?" He did not mean Peter or He would have said "upon *thee* will I build my church." The word Peter—petros—means a part of a rock, that is a stone. When the Lord says upon what He is going to build His church, He no longer speaks of *petros,* a stone, but he uses the word *petra,* which means a rock, out of which the petros, the stone, is hewn. The word petra, rock, He uses for the first time in Matt. vii:24, 25. The house there is built upon a *petra,* a rock, and cannot fall, and this rock is He Himself. "This rock" upon which the assembly is built is "Christ, the Son of the living God" as confessed by Peter.

But why this peculiar use of petros and petra—a part of a rock and the rock? Ah, it brings out the most precious truth that Peter and every true believer in possession of eternal life, this life imparted, is associated with Him, is a part of Him, for He is the Eternal Life.

Let Peter answer from the God-breathed words of his first Epistle, "To whom (Christ) coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii:4-6). Here is the same relation of stone and stones, and Peter himself settles the question of who the stone is—not he, but Christ—and Peter, like every other true believer, is but a living stone built upon Himself. It would take us too far to look to the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah xxviii:16, the basis of Peter's words.

But the Lord has more to say to Peter. "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest loose on the earth, shall be loosed in the heavens" (verse 19).

These words have been very grossly misapplied and the most abominable doctrines have been built upon it. It is indeed strange that but few Christian believers are clear about their meaning. From these words to Peter the very ridiculous, Christ and the Gospel dishonoring picture is drawn, which represents Peter with keys in his hands guarding the entrance of heaven, and that it is left to him, who shall be admitted and who rejected. The Lord did not say the keys to heaven were given to him, nor did he say that the keys to the church were in his hands and with the loosing in the earth and loosing in heaven the Lord never meant that the eternal destiny of one single soul was left in Peter's hands.

Let us see that the keys of the *Kingdom of the heavens* were given to him. The Kingdom of the heavens is not heaven nor is it the church, and upon this fact rests the true meaning of the words before us. Notice the *place* Peter has in the church, not different from the place every believer holds in the assembly through the Grace of God, is given first and when the Lord speaks of giving him keys of the Kingdom of the heavens, He confers upon him authority for actions *not* in the church, but in the Kingdom of the heavens. It is therefore wrong to say that the Lord gave the keys of the church to Peter, except one assumes (which is so often done) that the church and the Kingdom are identical.

We have learned before (Matt. xiii) what we have to understand by the Kingdom of the heavens in its present form. It embraces the entire sphere of Christian profession, all Christendom. Every one who confesses the name of Christ is in the Kingdom of the heavens, though that one may not at all be a true believer. This Kingdom of the heavens is in existence in the earth during the absence of

the King; it is committed into the hands of men, and it is to be administered by men. Now, if the Lord tells Peter that He will give to him the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens, He puts the administration of the Kingdom into his hands. The question arises next, *Did the Lord assign to Peter a special place distinct from the other disciples?* Are the keys peculiar to Peter and only to Peter? Was Peter to have these keys exclusively? These are important questions.

It is easily proven that the Lord did *not* mean to single out Peter and give to him a work distinct from the other disciples, nor did he give him a peculiar place or one of supremacy.

The Lord adds immediately after the declaration that He will give to him the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens—"*and* whatsoever thou mayest bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, etc." Now, if we turn to the eighteenth chapter of this Gospel (verse 18) we find that the Lord repeats this very commission and He addresses it no longer to Peter but to the *whole* company of disciples. Peter must be looked upon in the whole passage as the *representative* of the disciples and as such of all true believers. If the Lord calls him "a stone," He certainly did not mean him *alone,* but every one who believes is a living stone, and so when He speaks of the keys and the binding and loosing He commits this authority not upon Peter exclusively, but upon every disciple, and as true believers form His assembly, upon the assembly as such.

It is generally taught that Peter used the keys on the day of Pentecost, and when he preached to Cornelius and his household (Acts x). It is assumed that the Lord gave this commission to him exclusively and that the words of the Lord were fulfilled at these occasions. However, this cannot be proven from the Scriptures, nor does Peter refer to

any special authority in preaching on the day of Pentecost or in the house of Cornelius.*

But what are the keys? The answer is, Knowledge (teaching and preaching) and Baptizing. "Go ye therefore and teach (disciple) all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii:12). These are the doors of entering into the professing sphere of Christendom, that is the Kingdom of the heavens. These keys are still used. The binding and loosing refers only to discipline on the earth. It has nothing whatever to do with remission of sins or eternal salvation. We pass this over at present, but shall enter into it more fully when we reach the eighteenth chapter, where we find these words in connection with the statement, "where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

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*After all that Rome and ritualism and even more evangelical systems have found in these keys it may be hard to credit such a view as this; and with many it has been customary to point to Peter's eminent place on the day of Pentecost in opening the kingdom to the Jews, as afterwards in the person of Cornelius to the Gentiles. But an eminent place may be fully allowed him in this way, while yet we deny him an exclusive place; and, in fact, we cannot exclude others on the day of Pentecost; nor even at Caesarea allow that this was the sole use of the key in relation to the Gentiles, any more than the use of *another* key than that which before had opened the kingdom to the Jews. One act did surely not exhaust the service of the key, nor to open the door *twice* require *two* keys. Can it be thought that the door once opened simply *remained* open, and needed no more opening? On the contrary, I believe it can be conclusively shown that the administration of the kingdom, which these keys stand for, is not yet over, is not at all come to an end in one initial authoritative act. Men still receive and are received in; and if the power of the keys speaks of admission into the kingdom, and the kingdom be the sphere of discipleship, then the key is in fact but authority to disciple.—*Numerical Bible.*

"Then He enjoined on His disciples that they should say to no man that He was the Christ" (verse 20). As the promised Messiah His people had rejected Him; He is now to go on towards Jerusalem to be delivered up and then raised from the dead to be announced as Lord and Christ. Therefore He enjoined His disciples not to publish Him as the Christ.

And now after the Lord had made known for the first time, upon Peter's confession, the future building of His assembly, He speaks likewise for the first time in this Gospel of His rejection, death and resurrection. "From that time Jesus began to shew to His disciples that He must go away to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised" (verse 21).

In the beginning of this chapter the fact was brought out that Israel had no heart for Him and His own knew Him not nor would they receive Him. What they would do to Him He now reveals. It was more than mere rejection of His Person and His words. He would have to suffer many things from the hands of the leaders of the nation and be killed; after death His resurrection. And when this solemn announcement came from His blessed lips He knew the full meaning of what was included in "the suffering of many things and be killed." He knew before He entered into the world what work He was to do. "Wherefore coming into the world He says, Sacrifice and offering thou willest not; but thou hast prepared me a body. Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. Then I said, Lo, I come, in the roll of the book it is written of me to do, O God, thy will" (Heb. x:5-7). He knew the suffering, for His own Spirit was in the prophets of old, testifying before of the sufferings which belong to Christ (1 Pet. i:11). He *began* then to speak of these sufferings

to His disciples, but He alone knew what it all meant. He had entered into the world for this very purpose to give His life and as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. We must also lay emphasis upon the words *"from that time* began Jesus." The building of His assembly and His suffering, death and resurrection are closely connected. The beginning of the assembly, the building of the same, could only be possible after the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ was finished. We read in Genesis ii:22 how the helpmeet of the first Adam was made. She was taken from Adam's side while he slept. She was built out of his side. It is that well known and blessed type of the last Adam and His assembly, Christ and the church.

No sooner had the last word of the announcement of His passion fallen from the lips of the Lord than the enemy is manifested, attempting to keep Him from going to the cross. It is Peter who interrupts Him. "And Peter taking Him began to rebuke Him, saying, God be favorable to thee, Lord; this shall in no wise be unto thee" (verse 22). The same Peter who had uttered that glorious confession, the revelation of the Father, becomes all at once the mouthpiece of the adversary. He had not been asked by the Lord what he thought of His statement; he speaks in the impulsiveness of the flesh, as a natural man. Perhaps the conception of Messiah's kingdom, His glory as an earthly King in which He as a Jew with his fellow disciples so strongly believed, was in part responsible for this hasty word, and explains why he became so readily an instrument of Satan. May be the words addressed to Peter by the Lord, the giving of a new name and the commission, lifted up Peter and gave him a spiritual pride, which brought on his hasty action. The way he acts seems to indicate this. He acts in an astonishing forwardness. He takes his Lord aside and then began to *rebuke* Him. The Lord, who rebuked the winds

and the sea, rebuked by His creature! What ignorance of the person of the Lord and what failure this action of Peter reveals. And what does he say to the Lord? He desires that God should be favorable unto Him by keeping Him from such a fate. But only through His sacrifical death could God's favor flow forth to lost men, and so Peter gives expression to the very endeavor of Satan, who would have kept the Lord Jesus Christ from going up to Jerusalem to die on that cross of shame.

And now turning round to Peter, the Lord speaks: "Get away behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence to Me, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men" (verse 23). The Lord recognizes the enemy behind Peter's words and He addresses that unseen one in almost the identical words He had used upon yonder mountain, from which Satan had showed Him the kingdoms of the world, offering the same to Him. We learned from the fourth chapter in the Gospel, from the temptations of our Lord by Satan, what the aim of the enemy was with every one of these temptations. He attempted to keep the Lord from going that path of humiliation, of obedience unto death, unto the death of the cross. Satan knew all his dreadful power, the power of death, would be broken and his complete defeat wrought on the cross, and to keep Him from going there was his aim. Here is a blunt attempt of Satan through Peter to hinder the Lord in His path.

And there is still another lesson which we cannot pass by. We read in the Epistle of James concerning the tongue, "Does the fountain, out of the same opening, pour forth sweet and bitter? Can, my brethren, a fig produce olives, or a vine figs?" Alas! it may be so with any believer, as it was with Peter, going on from the sweet revelation of the Father to the bitter things of the enemy and giving expres-

sion to them; and he was not conscious of it. "Thy mind is not on the things that are of God." What a word this is for our consideration! As soon as the mind ceases to be occupied with the things that are of God, and we turn to the things that are of men, we are stepping on the territory of the adversary. "For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv:8, 9).

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, If any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (verses 24, 25).

These words are addressed to the disciples and not to unbelievers. It is therefore not a question of salvation. We are not asked to deny self and take up the cross in order to be saved. These words tell us that the way the Lord went is the way of all His true disciples. He states in a few words all the great truths of the association of the believer with the Lord, which the Holy Spirit brings out so fully in the Epistles. We read of the same association in the Gospel of John, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If any one serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there also shall be my servant" (John xii:24-26). Of course there is an immeasurable difference between Him and the believer. He alone could drink the cup, and yet the path He went is our path. In the third chapter of Joshua we read of the passage of God's people over Jordan. The ark of the covenant led the way and all the people followed. Between the ark and the people, how-

ever, was maintained the space of two thousand cubits. And yet they all followed after. It is the type for us. He has made the way and we follow Him. "For to this have ye been called; for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. ii:21). But how little of the denial of self and the losing of the life is known in these days. Many are, no doubt, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; but do they follow Him? Is His path ours, too? It is not only possible to believe in the Lord and not follow Him, but it is the most common thing we see to-day about us. If we are loyal to Him in a world which has rejected Him and which is unchanged, we shall share His rejection. We may not be called upon in these days to lay down our lives for His sake, but we should be willing for it, should it become again a test of following Him. Surely as we desire to follow *Him* and He is before us, we shall find abundant occasion to deny ourselves and take up our cross. In the degree we look upon Him, our adorable Lord, and He is the object of our affection, in that degree shall we be obedient to Him, deny self and take up the little cross. It will be a pleasure, a joy and a blessing then. As the martyrs went to the stake with singing or faced the wild animals with holy laughter and praises on their lips, so shall we praise Him for the *little* suffering with Him in these evil days.*

"For what does a man profit if he should gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (verse 26). What solemn

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*"Take up his cross. These words are not to be understood as meaning that we should choose a cross. Begin only with self-denial and then the cross will come of itself. He says 'his cross'; for He does not teach that we should bear the identical cross which He bore. Everyone's cross has been prepared according to the measure of each one's strength" (1 Cor. x:13).—Martin Luther on the Gospels.

questions these are! And who could answer them? Surely if anything is taught in them it is the immense, immeasurable value of the soul. The soul is immortal; if it were not these questions would be unreasonable.

The denial of the immortality of the soul and with it the teaching of man dying like the beast, if he dies without Christ, is one of Satan's lies which has gained ground throughout Christendom in these last days.

The last verse of this chapter contains another revelation. "For the Son of Man is about to come in the Glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will render to each according to his doings. Verily, I say unto you, There are some of those standing here that shall not taste of death at all until they shall have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (verses 27, 28).

These words refer to His second coming, His coming in power and in glory. They have puzzled not a few readers, and all kinds of spiritual meaning have been read into them. They are, however, very clear if we read at once the first part of the seventeenth chapter, where we find six days after the Lord and three of His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. What the disciples beheld there was the type of His glorious second coming as Son of Man in His Kingdom. Our exposition of the next chapter will lead us deeper into this fact.

The sixteenth chapter has brought before us seven revelations:

1. The Rejection of the Lord.
2. The Confession of the Lord as the Christ the Son of the Living God.
3. The Building of His Assembly.
4. The Authority of His Assembly.
5. The Death and Resurrection of the Lord.
6. The Path of the Disciple.
7. The Return of the Lord.

CHAPTER XVII.

The first part of this chapter gives us the record of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. The portion before us is one of the richest in the entire book of Matthew; so full of precious teachings and suggestions that one almost shrinks from attempting an exposition, for it seems impossible to touch on all the phases and lessons coming from this great event.

Let us remember that the Holy Spirit has given us three accounts of the transfiguration. Besides the one here we have one in Mark and in Luke. In each, special points of the great event are made prominent in full accord with the meaning and scope of the three Gospels. We find no record of the transfiguration in the fourth Gospel. It would be out of place in that Gospel, for John is the instrument to reveal Christ as the Son of God and the eternal Life. In Luke we find that something is said which is not found in the other two accounts. We read there: "And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance became different and His raiment white and effulgent." The Gospel of Luke presents our Lord as Son of Man and we read there often that He prayed, and thus the information given to us in Luke is in full accord with that Gospel. In Matthew we learn something which is only reported there, namely, that His face shone as the *sun*. The importance of this fact we shall discover in the course of the exposition. In Mark and Luke the voice out of the cloud says, "This is my beloved Son; hear Him"; but in Matthew alone we read, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight; hear Him."

These and other differences are the mark of divine inspiration; the Holy Spirit, being the narrator of the event, reports the occurrence in harmony with the purpose of each one of these Gospels.

And now as we turn to the divine record of the transfiguration in the Gospel of Matthew we desire first of all to quote the inspired words of the man who stands out so prominently in the sixteenth chapter and who is likewise one of the witnesses of the transfiguration; that is Peter. In his last Epistle we read: "For we have not made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, following cleverly imagined fables, but having been eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from the Father honor and glory, such a voice being uttered to Him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I found my delight;* and this voice we heard uttered from heaven, being with Him in the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic Word made surer, to which ye do well taking heed as to a lamp shining in an obscure place until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. i:16-20).

That Peter refers in these words once more to the scene of glory on that mountain top which his eyes beheld long ago needs no further proof. He does so "knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is speedily to take place" (verse 14).

We learn therefore that the transfiguration as *interpreted not by men but by the Holy Spirit,* is the pattern of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That wonderful scene on the holy mountain of which Peter had been eye-witness was a pattern of the return of the Lord, visibly and gloriously to the earth surrounded by His saints.

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*The "Hear Him" is here omitted.

The entire Old Testament prophetic word speaks of this great event, and for this reason the transfiguration of the Lord is a confirmation of these prophetic predictions, and more than that, the earnest of their final and complete fulfilment. We have the prophetic word *made surer* in the scene on the holy mountain, for in the transfiguration we behold that which prophet after prophet had declared.

What we have just stated is a most important key to the right understanding of the passage before. Let us call to mind again, the Holy Spirit tells us that the transfiguration is the pattern of the coming of the Lord.

Now this should silence once and for all the strange interpretations which are made of the last verse of the preceding chapter, which is, by the unfortunate division of these chapters, wrested from its true place. Some, the Lord had said, were standing with Him there who should not taste death at all until they should see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. The favorite expositions are that the Lord meant "the destruction of Jerusalem," and others tell us "they were to see the Lord coming in the triumphs of the Gospel," etc.

All these opinions are the opinions of men. Some of those standing there did not taste death until they saw Him coming, for after six days Peter, James and John beheld Him in His power and Glory, a pattern of the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

"After six days."—Even the number six is full of meaning as the number "eight" has a similar meaning in Luke where it says, "After these words, about eight days." The number eight is the number of resurrection, and as the Son of Man in resurrection He appears in Luke; while "six" is man's number, the number signifying the days of work—after six days—after work and man's day is run out, the day of the Lord, the kingdom. And with Him He takes Peter, and James, and John his brother, and brings them into a

high mountain apart. The mountain may have been Hermon, which is not far from Cæsarea Philippi. The men who were later with Him in the garden in that awful night scene, when they slept, while He prayed and His sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth, are here on the mountain with Him to witness His Glory. But here, too, while He prayed they were oppressed with sleep (Luke ix:32). How this manifests what man is and how it brings out the perfection of Himself! The fact that the disciples were oppressed with sleep makes it evident that the transfiguration must have been at night. The Lord so often spent His nights in prayer and came *down* in the morning. Blessed type of His presence with the Father now as our intercessor and advocate and His coming again.

"And He was transfigured before them. And His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as the light" (verse 2). What a transformation it must have been! How the garment of light and glory is put upon Him and rays of glory shot forth from His person, the One whom Pharisees a little while ago had blasphemed and who had said, "The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." The One who had hidden His glory beneath the form of a servant bursts forth in glory, and it was *His* glory. The word used here in the original for "transfigured" is used only twice besides in this passage. We find it in Romans xii:2 and 2 Cor. iii:18. His Grace transforms us now, and by and bye in resurrection we shall be transformed according to the same image—"conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the first born among many brethren." We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Thus may we, as children of God, look upon His glory here and know it is our Glory. Beloved! look upon Him and rejoice, for "when the Christ is manifested, who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory."

And His face shone like the sun. He is the Sun, the Sun of righteousness, and as we have in Matthew the dispensational side, it is once more the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to put this description here and omit it in the other Gospels. The sun is the great light which rules the day, and when the sun is absent night rules. He does not shine now as Sun of Righteousness, the moon only—the type of the church—gives her faint light; it is night. But day will come and the Sun of Righteousness rises with healing in His wings. Then He the Sun cometh forth "as a bridegroom of His chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Ps. xix:5, 6). Thus shall He come again, and the Sun He created will pale before Him in His wonderful Glory.

"And lo, Moses and Elias appeared to them talking with Him." Two departed saints come into view first of all. Moses, the representative of the law, one who had passed through death, and Elias, standing for the prophets, the one who had *never* seen death, but had been removed in a fiery chariot, appear alongside the Lord. We may well think of Him as standing in the middle. He is the center of the Heavens and of heavenly beings. In the Gospel of Luke we read that Moses and Elias, appearing in glory, spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Both Law and Prophets speak of His suffering and of His Glory as well. He the one in the middle is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

Looked upon from the standpoint of a pattern of His coming into His kingdom, Moses is the type of those saints who died in Christ, who were put to sleep through Jesus, and whom the Lord will bring with Him when He comes. Elias, the one who did not see death, who was caught up from the earth, is the type of those believers who shall not

sleep but be changed in the twinkling of an eye—caught up to meet the Lord in the air. So we have even here the precious revelation in 1 Thess. iv:13-18 "made surer." When He comes He will bring us all with Him.

And of course Moses and Elias were known. Their individuality was not swallowed up by death or removal from the earth without death. This should answer definitely the oft made inquiry, shall we know each other in resurrection glory? Of course we will. As Moses and Elias were easily recognized by the disciples, so shall every saint be recognized. What joy it will be then to see HIM first of all and to be with Him, whom we have never seen and whom we shall see as HE IS, the Man in Glory. What joy to look upon a Paul, John, Peter and all the beloved of God! Yes we shall know each other, though all human, earthly relationship ceases forever in resurrection.

The three disciples who gazed upon this glorious scene typify here the remnant of Israel, those who in the night look up and see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. Thus the kingdom scene is complete.

And Peter answering said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good we should be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; for thee one, and for Moses one, and one for Elias" (verse 4).

Poor Peter! What a failure he makes of it again. Once more he acts as spokesman for his fellow disciples and intrudes himself upon the scene of glory. He had absolutely no conception of what all this meant. He had of course later by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven and opening the eyes of his heart.* But what was the harm in making

*How often in prayer meetings one hears requests that feelings of joy and blessing may come upon the meeting, that they might say "it is good for us to be here—let us make here three tabernacles." This is a much used phrase and indicates how little the vision is understood by Christian people.

the suggestion? It was simply the flesh speaking and Peter uttered still words as he did previously, which flowed from a mind which is not on the things which are of God, but that are of men. In the sixteenth chapter he rebuked His Lord and tried to keep Him back from going to the cross and was an instrument of the enemy, and here once more his words show the subtle cunning of the same enemy, whose tool Peter so readily became even on that holy mountain.

He lowers the dignity and person of his Lord by putting Him on the same level with Moses and Elias. And behind it lurked another thought, the very same attempt to keep the Lord from being obedient unto the death of the cross, which was made in the temptations in the wilderness, which was hid in Peter's "God be favorable unto Thee," is made here once more. Peter would have a Christ in Glory and the state of the kingdom there *without* the cross, and he is even willing with his two associates to work for it, for he says, "Let *us make* here three tabernacles."

All this foreshadows what would be done with the Lord of glory. The corrupt forms of Christianity have put the Lord Jesus Christ alongside of holy men (holy in their estimation), or alongside of great men of the world, and thus robbed Him of His Glory. Not for a moment could this be tolerated. Peter is still babbling—*while* he was still speaking something happens. It is God the Father Himself who interferes and who bears witness that this Jesus, this Son of Man, is His Son, *is God*. "While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and lo a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight, hear Him" (verse 5).

Wonderful heavenly answer. "And the disciples hearing it, fell upon their faces and were greatly terrified." The heavens opened and the Glory of the Lord in that bright cloud is manifested. These three men well knew what that

cloud meant. It was the cloud which spoke of Jehovah's presence. That cloud which had been withdrawn from Israel for centuries had all at once appeared again. Then Jehovah had returned and condescended to be with His people once more. They knew they stood in His presence as Isaiah knew it when he saw the glorious vision. Therefore, they were terrified, for they knew as sinful men they stood in the Holy of Holiest and they had no sacrifice. And now the voice out of the cloud. The Father speaks and He speaks of the Son. He bears witness to the eternal relationship of Himself with Him, who was ever with Him and ever His delight. He calls them away from occupation with Moses and Elias; neither law nor prophets can help you and make you acceptable. Here He is—my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him! He has pleased the Father and in Him the Father and the Father's heart is revealed. Men are to hear Him, and refusing Him means refusing God. In Him we are brought to God. Of course the work of the cross is here anticipated. And thus in Him the Father speaks, to Him the Father directs us, through Him we are brought to the Father, and by Him the heavens are opened. And all the precious thoughts which here crowd to the heart and the mind we must leave untouched. Oh, may we find our delight in Him in whom God finds His delight! Never can we make too much of Him. As then the cloud appeared and there was an open manifestation of the Glory and Jehovah's presence, so in the coming day of His return all will be repeated. Then *He must* be heard.

"And Jesus coming to them touched them, and said, Rise up and be not terrified. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus alone" (verse 8).

He touched them as He will touch His poor frightened people, the remnant of Israel, in that day. But they saw Jesus alone. Blessed are we if we see Him and Him alone.

We have learned then from the transfiguration that we have in it a perfect picture of the kingdom to come. Christ in Glory, His face like the Sun, in the center. Resurrected saints and those who were caught up are with Him. His Glory covers Him and them. Living men are in His presence terrified. The heavens are opened and mercy and peace flow forth.

"And as they descended from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man be risen up from among the dead" (verse 9).

The sounding forth of His Kingdom glory was no longer in order, for the Kingdom had been rejected; after His resurrection this vision was to be made known and fully understood, but not before. The disciples, the witnesses of the transfiguration, had indeed little knowledge of its meaning. From the Gospel of Mark we learn that they kept this saying and questioned themselves what rising from the dead was (Mark ix:10). How all this became changed after the Lord had risen, ascended on high, and the Holy Spirit had come down from heaven!

The appearance of Elijah in that glorious vision on the holy mountain leads to a question which the disciples bring to their Master. The coming of Elijah as the forerunner of King Messiah was firmly believed by every Jew, and it is still held by all orthodox Jews. Elijah is first to come, and when he is come then the Messiah is about to come and with His coming begins the *olam habo* (the world or age to come), this is a strong article of talmudical Judaism. The disciples bring their question, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first have come? And He answering said to them, Elias indeed comes first and will restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias has already come, and they have not known him, but have done unto him whatever they would. Thus also the Son of Man is about to suffer from

them. Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (verses 10-13). The difficulty which the disciples had about Elias was about the prophecy contained in the last prophetic book of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. iv:5, 6). They had seen Elias in glory. In the land and among the people all was dark; no restoration, no turning of the heart of the fathers to the children and the children to their fathers was noticeable. On the contrary, they had witnessed how He in whom they believed as the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, was being rejected and the nation knew Him not. And still they hoped for the kingdom and that age of blessing for Jerusalem. What then about Elias? Would he yet appear and restore all things? The Lord answers their difficulty, as He always does when His own turn to Him and put their difficulties before Him. He does not deny the fact that Elias comes first and will restore all things. Furthermore, He told them that he had come and they had not received him, but rejected him and his testimony. As he was rejected, so He the Son of Man was now about to suffer from them, is His third statement. All at once they understood that He meant John the Baptist. They were right. John the Baptist had come in the power and spirit of Elijah. He was the voice in the wilderness, the way preparer, the one in whom the last prophecy in Malachi *might* have been fulfilled, but they did not know Him. His rejection was the prelude to the rejection of the Lord as we have seen before (chapter xi). John surely was the Elias for that time.

But this does not fulfill Malachi's prophecy. That prophecy is yet to see its fulfilment. Before the Lord returns to

earth in power and glory another forerunner, an Elijah, will come and his testimony will not be rejected then; he will indeed be Elijah who restores all things and he will be followed by the coming of the King to set up His kingdom. This brings before us the questions, *when* will the Elijah who restores all things appear? *where* will he appear, and *what* will his work be? These questions are important in view of men who have of late arisen claiming that they are Elijah, one especially calling himself Elijah the Restorer, and boldly and boastingly declares that his mission is to establish a Zion in the earth and restore things before the Lord comes. *When* will Elijah appear? He will come upon the scene at the time of the end. This prophetic time of the end is specified in the entire prophetic Word; it is Jewish history resumed. As long as the church is in the earth that end time does not begin. The removal of the church will be followed by the last stage of the ending of the age. During that time, the great tribulation, Elijah appears. Any believer who holds the scriptural doctrine of the *coming of the Lord for His saints before the great tribulation* is in no danger to follow deceivers who claim to be something, for he knows he shall see not Elijah nor the Antichrist.

Where will Elijah appear? Certainly not in America, Australia or Europe, but in Israel's land, where Elijah of old witnessed and John the Baptist, as herald of the King, stood. His ministry is confined to the land of Israel. *What* will his work be? It will not be a work to restore Christendom or to restore the church, or to purify the politics of this world and rid society of certain evils, but his work is *exclusively* among the people who are the kingdom people. His witness is to the remnant of Israel. Like John's call to repentance, he will preach repentance and his testimony will be received; he will accomplish the mission of Malachi iv:5, 6.

The appearance of Elijah, therefore, does not come as long as the church is present; he appears in Israel's land and his work is not among Gentiles, but among the remnant of Israel. This stamps every man who arises at this time with the assertion that he is Elijah as one who is deceived or a deceiver, perhaps, both, *deceived and a deceiver.* It is not at all strange that such men find listening ears among Christians.

And now the Lord and His disciples are down in the valley again. They had descended from the holy mountain and once more they are among the multitude, who perhaps had waited through the night for Him. At the dawn of the morning He appears.

"And when they came to the multitude, a man came to Him, falling on his knees before Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and suffers sorely; for often he falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to the disciples and they were not able to heal him. And Jesus answering said, O, unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon went out from him and the boy was healed from that hour. Then the disciples, coming to Jesus apart, said to Him, Why were we not able to cast him out? And He says to them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Be transported hence to yonder place, and it shall transport itself; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting"* (verses 14-21).

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*It is interesting to know that the twenty-first verse is not found in the two oldest manuscripts dating back to the fourth century, the Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

This is another very suggestive passage. It has many dispensational and spiritual lessons. The coming down of the Lord, the one who has been transfigured, from the mountain in the morning is clearly typical of His coming again in Glory. And what does He find when He comes? He finds Satan exercising his soul and body-destroying power. The boy possessed by a demon suffering sorely is the type of Satan's dominion when the Son of Man comes again. Multitudes wait for His return, and when He comes He finds misery, suffering and unbelief. The disciples had the power conferred upon them to cast out demons, but they were helpless; they could not do it, and unbelief was plainly at the root of their inability. We must, however, be cautious to apply this in the right way. It would be incorrect to make these disciples the church. We have seen before that they represent the Jewish remnant (chapter x). Such a remnant of Jewish believers will be in existence after the body of Christ, the church, is complete and come into the presence of the Lord. This future Jewish remnant will preach the Gospel of the kingdom and they will go once more through the cities of Israel manifesting the powers of the kingdom. And yet they will not be able to cast out the demon which holds dominion. The coming Lord can do this and does it with His manifestation.

However, the principles underlying the incident have a deeper spiritual application. Here is a company of believers, for such were the disciples, and the Lord had put power into their hands, yet they were not able to use it. Perhaps, as over and over again they attempted to drive out the demon and failure followed, the multitude jeered at them, and the effect upon the child must have been awful. Their failure made the case worse. Thus we are as believers in the midst of an evil world, which is under the sway of its god, the devil, and his demons. Complete victory and power over

the world and its god is given to us by, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet here are many of God's people as helpless and powerless as were these disciples at the foot of the mountain. Weakness and failure is seen everywhere, and instead of exercising full control and having full power over that which is evil, the evil has full control. And why? Oh, let us put the words prominently before the eyes of our hearts, "*Because of your unbelief.*" Unbelief is the only reason for this failure. Unbelief gives the world and Satan all their power. Faith lays him low and the walls of Jericho (the world) must crumble to dust without even a single hand lifted up against them. *Nothing* is impossible for him who believes. Faith can remove and does remove mountains, which mean obstacles and difficulties in our way. How little such faith is exercised among believers. And we may go still further and ask what is the reason of lack of faith? A severed communion with the Lord and occupation with self. If the Lord is ever before our hearts and self is out of sight, faith can readily be exercised. Therefore the Lord gives the remedy, "Prayer and Fasting." Prayer means communion with the Lord and dependence on Him. Fasting (the *least* meaning of it, abstinence from food), the losing sight of self; self-denial.

The healing of the lunatic is followed by a second announcement of His suffering, death and resurrection. "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is about to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and the third day He shall be raised up. And they were greatly grieved" (verses 22, 23). This new declaration of His passion, following the transfiguration scene and the manifestation of His power over the devil, is a reminder that through the cross alone the glory could be accomplished. In the sixteenth chapter the announcement of the fact that He would build His

church is followed by the first statement of His suffering, and there the elders, chief priests and scribes are mentioned, and His glory as the Son of Man is manifested. He speaks again of His death, and the chief priests and elders are not mentioned, but He speaks of being about to be delivered into the hands of *men*. This head of the body, His church, and head of the new creation as Second Man He was to become by death and resurrection. And His disciples, in hearing these words, were greatly grieved. All these sayings of the Lord were mysterious unto them. They knew not that all the hope of glory and the kingdom could only be realized by His death and triumphant resurrection, or they would not have been grieved.

The closing paragraph of the seventeenth chapter contains a most precious incident, which we shall find again full of most suggestive and blessed teachings. The scene is at Capernaum, meaning village of *comfort*. Let us read the text first. "And when they came to Capernaum, those who received the didrachmas came to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the didrachmas? He says, Yes. And when he came to the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What dost thou think, Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive custom or tribute? from their own sons or from strangers? Peter says to Him, From strangers. Jesus said to him, Then are the sons free. But that we may not be an offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish which comes up, and when thou hast opened its mouth thou wilt find a stater; take that and give it to them for me and thee" (verses 24-27).

One is at a loss how to give out a little of the wonderful riches of grace and glory which are manifested in this little incident there by the sea of Galilee. And even if we would bring out every point and lesson the Holy Spirit has put here for us, it would all be but imperfect stammering. The grace

and glory of Himself is here most wonderfully brought forth. He manifests Himself as the omnipotent Lord; His divine majesty and power is shown forth in the miracle of the fish, and in wonderful condescension this Lord is servant, to make us sons with Himself, and as such, free. But let us point out the details.

The temple-tribute is here meant, which, according to Jewish custom, was collected at the end of the month *Adar* (March). That it was *not* the ransom money for the soul, spoken of in Exodus xxx:11-16, is obvious. The amount of tribute was in our money about sixty cents. The collector came to Peter, perhaps for the reason that the Lord was not present. And Peter acts once more in his hasty manner. Without thinking he answers with a ready "yes." But, Peter, hast thou forgotten thy wonderful confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" Is the vision from the holy mountain so quickly gone that thou canst put again thy Lord down on the level with every other Jew who is obliged to pay temple-tribute? Alas! even so it was. The dignity and glory of His Lord was quite forgotten and out of sight.

We see Peter after his hasty reply in the house surprised by the Lord. He knew his heart and the question which had been asked, as well as the answer which Peter had given. Jesus anticipated him, and addressing him as Simon, He asks, "the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive tribute? from their own sons or from strangers?" What a strong proof this is once more of the Divinity of the humble Jesus. He knew the thoughts of His disciple; this Jesus is the omniscient God, God manifested in the flesh. Peter now gives the correct answer, "From strangers;" to which Jesus replies, "Then are the sons free." In this declaration all His glory is once more revealed. He is *the* Son, He is Jehovah, whose glory had appeared in the tem-

ple; how could He then pay tribute to that which is His own? As Son He was free, no such obligation was upon Him. Oh, how the dignity of His Person stands before us in these simple words. He shows His place as Son, and as such He is exempt from the tribute. But while thus He shows His divine right, He does not insist upon it. "But that we may not be an offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou wilt find a stater; take that and give it to them for me and thee."

And here still greater grace and glory is revealed for our hearts to enjoy. First notice that the Lord speaks not of Himself alone, but also of Peter. He had not said that He as the Son is free, but the "*sons* are free." In speaking of giving offence He says "we," and when the money is miraculously provided it was to be "for me and thee," for the Lord and for Peter. What precious thoughts these facts bring to us! The Lord, the Son of God, who is free, identifies Himself with His disciple, with Peter, who, as we have seen before, is the representative of the disciples. In this gracious identification of the Lord with His own, every believer is included. He is Son and we are sons with Him; He is free and He has made us free. "If therefore the Son shall set you free ye shall be really free"—He has identified Himself with us and we are sharers of His grace, His humiliation and His glory. But what an example it is which He in His gracious action puts here before us for our consideration and "to go and do likewise." He surrenders His personal right for the sake of "not giving offence." Surely "He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps." It behooves us now, though we are sons of God and sons of glory, to walk in humility, without asserting our right, willing in all things which concern ourselves to suffer. Alas! how little it is done—how great

the offence given again and again, by the self-assertion, the ungracious and worldly behavior of those who through the grace of God are not of the world as He is not of it. May we learn of Him in this sweet lesson. He could say, "I am meek and lowly of heart," and His humility shines forth in His action. Like He the Son becoming a servant may we as sons be servants too. And then, think of it, He provided for all which was needed. Just the amount which was needed "for me and for thee" was at His command; it was ready and prepared. All is His and unto the riches of Himself He has taken us. "For me and thee" speaks of individuality and intimacy. Faith is to take hold of it and realize even better and more fully that all need is supplied by Himself and that from Him all comes to us. And by what a mighty miracle He provides the need. Once more His glory flashes forth. Again we learn that this Jesus who speaks here is God, God the Creator; as such He manifests Himself. It is a practical illustration of Col. i:16 and Hebrews i:3. He knows the deep sea, for He made the sea. He knows the mysteries of the deep, nothing is hid from Him. He knows the piece of money in the bottom of the sea, for the silver and the gold are His. As He spoke before to the restless sea and wind and waves obeyed Him, so here, the deep obeys His voice. A creature of His is there, a fish, and He commands the fish to take up a piece of money. Then He brings the fish to Peter's hook. Omniscience and omnipotence is here which belong to God and God is present. And this Jesus is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. He who knew the fish and commanded that fish to take the stater and guided it to Peter's hook, is our Lord, with power in heaven and on earth. In view of such gracious and wonderful demonstration of His power the heart cries out—*Oh why do we not trust Him fully* at all times and circumstances! Why do we not even hasten to

such a Lord whose grace and power is all for us, and ever trust Him for all we want?

Perhaps here is also the thought of death in type and that through death our need is provided.. Out of the water the fish was taken, and out of the deep provision was made.

CHAPTER XVIII.

So closely is this chapter connected with the events of the previous one that it should not be divided into a separate chapter at all. It was "in that hour" the disciples came to Him with their question. When the Lord had just uttered the great truth "the sons are free" and added His gracious Word "that we may not be an offence to them" and the disciples asked their question about being greatest in the kingdom, the great Teacher continues His teachings.

"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens? And Jesus having called a little child to Him, set it in their midst, and said, Verily I say to you, unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens" (verses 1-5). In the Gospel of Luke (chapter ix:46) we read that they were reasoning amongst themselves who should be the greatest. Perhaps the Lord's words to Peter about the keys of the kingdom produced this strife among the disciples. While the Lord had set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem and spoke of His coming suffering and death, they had these selfish thoughts and reasonings. And so they approach the Lord, in the hour when He, who had become poor, had manifested His divine power in bringing the fish with a piece of money from the bottom of the sea to Peter's hook. And how graciously He teaches them. He knew their hearts and read their thoughts. He knew the depths of their natures and that one of their numbers was not His own. What love that He so patiently instructs them.

The disciples meant of course the kingdom of the heavens, as they understood it, that kingdom which was and is to be established in the earth, and their selfish ambition was reaching out for a great earthly position in that kingdom. They thought of the time when service, self-denial and suffering would be rewarded by the King; who then would be greatest? And the Lord takes a little child and sets the little one in their midst and through this object lesson teaches them who will be the greatest in the kingdom. What the Lord tells His disciples here is practically the same which Nicodemus heard from His lips in that night visit. The kingdom must be entered in and that means conversion, to turn about in a different direction, and become as a little child, in other words, a new life is given, a new existence begins, the believer is born again and enters the kingdom as a little child, as he entered by the natural birth into the world. He gives therefore the great characteristics of those who have entered the kingdom and the great principles which are to govern them. It is lowliness, littleness and dependence. These are the characteristics of a little child. "Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens." Having entered into the kingdom by being born again, we are to act practically according to these principles and he who does so is the greatest. The new life will grow and develop, but in regard of these characteristics the believer is ever to remain a child in simplicity, dependence on the Lord and in lowliness of mind as well as self-forgetfulness. It is by the constant following of these principles that growth in Grace is attained. Nothing is more detrimental to the development of spiritual life than self-consciousness, self-confidence and pride. How often the Lord has to do with His children what the earthly father has to do with his children when they are wilful. He has to discipline them,

and that means to show them their true place as a little child. "Moreover, we have had the fathers of our flesh as chasteners, and we reverenced them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed chastened for a few days, as seemed good to them; but He for profit, in order to the partaking of His holiness" (Heb. xii:9, 10). Lowliness of mind, that self-forgetfulness and dependence on God, was the path of the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His humiliation. Let this mind, therefore, be in you which was in Christ Jesus.

"And whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me. But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were profitable for him that a great millstone had been hanged upon his neck and he be sunk into the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; yet woe to that man by whom the offence comes! And if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; it is good for thee to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than have two hands or two feet to be cast into eternal fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is good for thee to enter into life one-eyed, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire" (verses 5-9).

The great thought put here before us is the identification of the Lord with every little one, each who has become a little child, that is born again. He is their Father and their Lord, closely identified with them. It reminds us of that beautiful word "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. ii:8). It is spoken of Israel, it finds a still higher application in us. We also may think of that other statement: "In all their affliction, He was afflicted" (Is. lxiii:9). And so honor done to one of the little ones is done unto Him, injury done to one of them is injury done to

Him. What glory of the believer this reveals! How this fact should teach us how to behave one towards the other and not despise any one who is Christ's. How apt we are to do this. This one or that one is so little taught in the Word, he is so ungracious—and with all our criticism we forget he is after all one of Christ's own.

Care, however, must be taken in interpreting the passage concerning those who offend, the casting into the sea with a millstone* and into eternal fire. That this cannot mean the true believer, who gives offence is obvious. The true believer may give offence, as alas! he often does, but the fate "eternal fire" or "hell of fire" is not for him. But in the kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens as it is now, there are not alone those who are truly born again, but also many who are mere professors without possessing life. These are of course indifferent and careless about grieving Him. The "eternal fire" is surely for those who though professing, continue deliberately in sin and unbelief. And yet the exhortation has a most solemn meaning for every true believer. Whatever is in your way, whatever is a stumbling block it is to be removed. If it is the hand by which we serve and act, or by the foot, the walk, or by the eye, the very best we have, *put it away* so as not to give an offence.

And our Lord continues: "See that ye do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in the heavens continually behold the face of my Father who is in the heavens" (verse 10). It would take many pages to follow or state all the different interpretations of

*Christ here speaks of a kind of death, perhaps nowhere, certainly never used among the Jews; He does it either to aggravate the thing, or in allusion to drowning in the Dead Sea, in which one cannot be drowned without something hung to him, and in which to drown anything by a common manner of speed implied rejection and execration.—*Horae Hebraeicae.*

these words and the various theories and doctrines which have been built upon it. That there are difficulties here none would deny.

Much has been made of this passage in teaching that there is a "guardian angel" for every believer. That angels have ministries which we cannot fully grasp now, cannot be denied.

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. i:14). Faith can enjoy it, child-like faith, without going into speculation. However the passage does not teach that every believer has an angel who guards and protects him and who sees the Father.

The question is, does the Lord still speak of believers or does He now refer to actual little ones? We believe the latter is the case. With the tenth verse ends properly the exhortation of the Lord in answer to the question of the disciples. The little child He had put in their midst was most likely still there, and it is now concerning little ones, little children, He speaks, that they should not be despised. Children are subjects in the kingdom of the heavens. How little the disciples understood their Lord and how they needed the very exhortation not to despise one of these little ones is seen in the next chapter, when they brought little children to the Lord and the disciples rebuked them. The Lord then declared: "Suffer little children, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven is of such" (chapter xix:13, 14). And when the Lord now speaks of "their angels in the heavens continually behold the face of my Father," what does He mean by it?

All of course depends on the interpretation of "angel." At the first glance it would *seem* as if these little ones have angels in heaven. There is a passage in Acts xii which is the key to solve the difficulty here. When Peter, rescued

by an angel, led forth miraculously from the prison house, knocked at the door of the praying assembly and Rhoda maintained that Peter stood outside, they said "It is his angel." They believed that Peter had suffered death and that his angel stood outside. What does "angel" mean in this passage? It must mean the departed spirit of Peter. This fact throws light on the passage before us. If these little ones, who belong to the kingdom of the heavens, depart, their disembodied spirits behold the Father's face in heaven; in other words, they are saved. Surely heaven is peopled by these little ones. What a company of them is in the presence of the Lord! The little ones perish not. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ was for them. The verses which follow and which have been said to be an interpolation, belong rightly here; indeed, they fit in most wonderfully, though in the Gospel of Luke we have the substance of these words enlarged. "For the Son of Man has come to save* that which is lost." "What think ye? If a certain man should have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine on the mountains, go and seek the one which has gone astray? And if it should come to pass that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more because of it than because of the ninety and nine not gone astray. So it is not the will of your Father who is in the heavens that one of these little ones should perish" (verse 11-14).

The words of our Lord, which follow His gracious declaration, that it is not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish, are very important. Here for the

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*The omission of "to seek" is significant. They (little children) are lost ones needing a Saviour, but *seeking* implies a condition of active wandering from God such as in their case is hardly begun yet. —*Num. Bible.*

second time in this gospel and the last time, the Lord uses the word "church," or as we translate it "assembly." We must have therefore additional teachings given by our Lord concerning His church, which He had announced in the sixteenth chapter He is going to build. We have learned before that the building of the church was future, that when He gave that statement there was no church in existence. And so the words He spoke to His disciples in the passage before us are in anticipation of the gathering out of the assembly or church.

Some have taught that the word "church" means a synagogue. Church and synagogue, however, are totally different terms.* Others have failed to see the close connection which exists between the first part of the chapter and the continued teachings of our Lord going now on about the authority of the church. That all is vitally connected in this chapter may not be discovered at the first glance, but it is so nevertheless. He had answered their question about the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens and true believers were described by Him as little children, born of God and in possession of the characteristics of a little child. No offence should be given to any of these little ones. He then spoke of His own mission, that He came to save that which is lost and of His Grace in seeking the sheep which has gone astray till He finds it and rejoices over it. And now He speaks of a brother who has sinned. How is he to be treated? The connection then is clear. If He sought us and saved us when we were lost in our sins, so we, in possession of His life, in the spirit of a little child in dependence

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*Of late this argument has been pressed in certain quarters that the word church means synagogue. However if the Lord had meant synagogue the Holy Spirit surely would have used the Greek word *"synagoge"* instead of *"ecclesia."*

upon Him and in meekness, are to seek our brother who has sinned. The instructions He gives, however, soon refer us to the church and her executive power on the earth during the absence of the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have to examine these words in detail.

"But if thy brother sin against thee, go reprove him between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained a brother" (verse 15). The question is how sin in a brother is to be treated. What kind of a sin is meant, whether a sin against a person or sin in a wider sense of the word, we shall not attempt to discuss. He is a brother who has sinned and the first thing to be done is that the one who knows about it is to go to him personally and reprove him, that is, show him his fault. The object of his reprover is not perhaps to defend himself, if a personal matter, a false accusation, is the sin, but it is to restore and gain the brother. But to go to the brother who has sinned needs great caution, earnest prayer, meekness and self judgment. If the reproving is attempted in a wrong spirit it will work untold harm. The Holy Spirit has given us in Galatians the description of the brother who should go and reprove him who has sinned and the manner in which he is to do it. "Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi:1). Alas! how little this is done. Instead of going at once to the brother who sinned, after earnest prayer and with the love and grace of God in the heart, the sin of the brother is often spread about and by this un-Christlike behavior magnified. Bitter feelings are stirred up, resulting in greater evils, slanders, backbiting, lying and other sins. If at last some one makes an attempt to see the brother, he finds the case perhaps beyond hope. How simply our gracious Lord has pointed out the way for us, what the first step is

to be if the brother has sinned. It is to be treated as a personal matter and the sinning brother should not needlessly be exposed. Such grace manifested is able to gain the brother.

But in case he does not hear, what is to be the second step? "But if he do not hear thee, take with thee one or two besides, that every matter may stand upon the word of two witnesses or three" (verse 16). Of course the two, which are to be taken along in this second step to restore a brother, must have the same spiritual characteristics as the brother who came to him first. It is to bring still greater love to bear upon him, but at the same time to show the brother that unconfessed sin, sin not put away, cannot be tolerated in a brother. Should he stubbornly refuse to see his fault, his case would appear hopeless and the last step to be done would hardly reach him, for from the very outset he has been hardening his heart against love and grace, the love of Christ, which sought to restore him.

And so the Lord gives the last injunction, "But if he will not listen to them tell it to the assembly." The sin is now to be made public, the whole assembly is to hear of it and of course from the side of the assembly or church there is to be renewed seeking to gain the brother in love. Hasty judging is to be avoided and in all these steps impatient haste, the fruit of the flesh, is to be avoided.

The assembly is mentioned, we repeat, in anticipation of its building in the future. The injunction given here could not have been kept at the time when the Lord gave it, nor before the day of Pentecost.* First of all *the* church had

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*It is very interesting though to find that the Elders and Rabbis of old had many sayings about reproving a brother which remind one strongly of the words here. It was also customary among the Jews to note those that were obstinate and after public admonition

to be called in existence. That the church is a gathering of persons unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we find later. This assembly then, the church, is to act as a body in the case of the brother who has sinned. Of course it means a *local* church gathered unto the name of the Lord of which the offender is a part.

"And if also he will not listen to the assembly; let him be to thee as one of the nations and a taxgatherer. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven." These are solemn and important words, as they not alone give us light on what is to be done with an impenitent brother, but also show us the responsibility and authority of the church on earth. He is, after refusing to hear the church, to be considered as one outside, one who has forfeited his place. This however does not mean that further attempts should not be made to restore him. The action of the assembly is to prove that holiness is to be maintained.

And now the "verily" of the Lord. Whatever has been read into these words of binding and loosing by the assembly we pass by. The words simply tell us that the Lord conferred authority to act on the earth for Himself, and the authority is absolute. But to whom does He give this authority? To the disciples, apostles to be conferred by them upon others? Never! That is the unscriptural, man-made doctrine which has displaced the person and the work of Christ, one of Satan's most powerful inventions. The au-

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in the synagogue to set a mark of disgrace upon them. The words by our Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my Name there I am in the midst of them," is also found in the talmudical writings. The old Rabbis say, "Two or three sitting in judgment, the *Shekinah* is in the midst of them." However all this does not authorize to say the synagogue is meant here.

thority is given to the church. He gives the church executive power. She is to act according to His rules laid down and in acting in fullest harmony with the absent Lord and obedient to His Word as well as guided by His Spirit, the action of the assembly is valid in heaven. The Lord sanctions it in heaven, whether it is binding or loosing. If, therefore, anything is done which deviates from His Word and is not according to His mind, He cannot sanction it. The case must be a very plain one. If there is disagreement, diversity of opinion, taking of different sides, it is evidence that the Lord cannot sanction what is done.

Alas! how little these injunctions have been followed! How little the church has understood the way of grace as well as her heaven-given, solemn authority. That which professes to be the church has made attempts to follow these injunctions, but being disobedient to the Word, has failed long ago and is powerless to carry out these words. Much of that which calls itself church is simply a human man-made institution, having adopted a set of rules, a form of government much like a club. Saved and unsaved are taken in and as for discipline that is all out of question.

And those who returned to the first principles how great their failure! The flesh has come in and worked havoc; things are done often in a sectarian spirit, a spirit which the Lord can never sanction. Yet all failure is *no* proof that what is spoken here by the Lord is impossible to carry out. It is possible and ever will be possible as long as our Lord is gathering out a people for His name. And while failure is everywhere failure may be avoided from our side if we are obedient to Him and to His Word.

He then continues with the words of comfort just on account of the difficulty: "Again I say to you, that if two shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from

my Father who is in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" (verses 19-20).

The Lord knew the difficulty of such a path and the responsibility which rests upon believers as an assembly with such an authority put upon them, and therefore He gives this exceeding great and precious promise. It is a promise which tells us that He and His strength and wisdom is on our side and that He is willing to supply that which we lack. The promise stands first of all in connection with the restoring of a brother who sinned. United prayer is first of all needed. Yet the promise is not limited to this. We are told to ask *touching anything* and the assurance is given that it shall be done for us by the heavenly Father. Prayer in secret is blessed and made in His Name has the assurance likewise of an answer, but united prayer, even if only by two who are agreed, who know their place, their responsibility, is what the Lord here emphasizes. And there is much need in these days of believers being agreed and casting themselves upon this promise, in confession of their weakness and with their responsibility resting upon them, making their requests known unto God. What mighty works have been accomplished in this way! It would take pages to record some of the victories gained, doors opened, barriers broken down, hundreds and thousands of souls saved, all accomplished through united prayer. He is still the same; the promise still holds good. And how graciously He puts the number the lowest; not a hundred, not fifty, not twenty-five—but if *two* shall agree.

The words "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name,* there am I in the midst of them" gives us the center to which the assembly is gathered. Not the name

*Not *in* My Name. This is a wrong translation. It is *unto* My Name.

of a man, but unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the exalted Head of His body. The promised presence of the Lord is for those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the One to whom they are gathered. Alas! that the very passage should have been used to foster the same sectarianism which has been the snare of the professing church! And still it is true where two or three are gathered unto the Name, which is above every name, rejecting all other names, there *is* an assembly and there *is* the Lord in the midst of them.

Peter now comes once more to the foreground. He is again the spokesman of the disciples. The mention of the word "church" most likely revived in him the memory of the words the Lord had uttered after Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter had, of course, then no knowledge of the full meaning of that which came from the lips of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times? Jesus says to him, I say not to thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (verses 21, 22). The question is in closest connection with what the Lord had said. But He had not said a word about forgiving a brother. The word "forgive" was not used once by our Lord; He had spoken of gaining a brother who had sinned. Did Peter perhaps mean how often he should forgive his brother before the case should be taken up in the order as indicated by our Lord? We think it is now specifically the question of personal grievances we may have against a brother. Peter thinks and speaks of self. The Rabbis had given the following rule: "Pardon a man once, that sins against another; secondly pardon him; thirdly pardon him; fourthly do *not* pardon him," etc.*

*Bab. Joma.

Peter, quite well acquainted with the traditions of the elders, most likely thought of this and he desired to show his appreciation of the gracious words he had heard by declaring his readiness to forgive his brother not three times, but twice three times and a little over. Until seven times? he asks. Surely, he must have thought the Lord will be pleased with such generosity and brotherly love. Ah, how little he knew the Grace of Him whom he had followed. The answer of the Lord must have been a revelation to Peter, "until seventy times seven." This is unlimited forgiveness. This God in Christ has forgiven us and forgives us, and the same Grace, unlimited Grace is to be shown towards the brother who sins against *me*. It is the same blessed word God the Holy Spirit gives us in the Epistles, "forbearing one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye" (Col. iii.:13). "And be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephes. iv:32).

This human question of Peter brought out the fullness of divine Grace.

And now the heavenly Teacher utters in connection with this a parable. "For this cause the kingdom of the heavens has become like a King who would reckon with his bondmen. And having begun to reckon, one debtor of ten thousand talents was brought to him. But he not having anything to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and his children, and everything that he had; and that payment should be made. The bondman, therefore, falling down did him homage, saying, 'Lord have patience with me and I will pay thee all.' And the lord of that bondman, being moved with compassion, loosed him and forgave him the loan. But that bondman having gone out, found one of his fellow bondmen who owed him a hundred denarii. And

having seized him, he throttled him, saying, Pay me if thou owest anything. His fellow bondman therefore, having fallen down at his feet, besought him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay thee. But he would not, but went away and cast him into prison until he should pay what was owing. But his fellow bondmen having seen what had taken place, were greatly grieved, and went and recounted to the lord all that had taken place. Then his lord having called him, says to him, Wicked bondman! I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow bondman, as I also had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry delivered him to the tormentors till he paid all that was owing to him. Thus also my heavenly Father shall do to you if ye forgive not from your hearts every one his brother" (verses 23-35).

In looking closer at this parable we must first of all be clear on the fact that it is a parable of the kingdom of heaven, and as such does not present to us the conditions as they prevail under the Gospel of Grace and in the church.

It is not the assembly which is before the Lord, but the Kingdom of the heavens, therefore the parable describes conditions as prevailing in the Kingdom. The parable illustrates an important principle. Here we have a picture of the sinner in the servant who owes the king ten thousand talents, about twelve million dollars. He is unable to pay this immense debt, as the sinner is unable to pay his debt. The servant is threatened with complete loss of all he has and possesses; and then appeals to the king, asking his patience for his willingness to pay all. But what does the king do? He ignores the plea; he knows the impossibility that this penniless servant could ever pay the debt he owes, and then in marvelous compassion he sets the bound servant free and forgives him. All this illustrates the hopeless-

ness of the sinner and the Mercy of God without bringing out the blessed facts of the Gospel. This would be beyond the scope of the parable. But what happens? The liberated and forgiven one finds a fellow servant who owes him a hundred denarii, which is about seventeen dollars. Fresh from his terrible experience, his narrow escape and the great mercy shown to him, he flies at the poor fellow's throat, a thing the king had not done, demands his pay, and without taking his plea at all into consideration casts him into prison. The mercy shown to him had not touched his heart; and with all that rich mercy extended to him, he is a wicked man and addressed thus by the king, who gives him over to tormentors, to suffer till he should pay all that was due. Thus a mere professor of the Gospel may act; his profession outwardly is that he is a sinner, that he owes God much and he professes to believe in the compassion and forgiveness of God. His heart, however, knows nothing of the Mercy and Grace of God. He goes on acting wickedly, and his evil heart is manifested by the way he treats his fellow servant. Where Mercy is given, Mercy must be shown. If the heart has really apprehended the Grace of God and realizes what God has done for us in His wonderful Grace, it will ever be gracious and forgive; if we do not act according to this principle we must expect to be dealt with by a righteous and holy God.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the first part of the nineteenth chapter we find a continuation of teachings concerning the kingdom. This, we repeat, is not the same kingdom promised to Israel, as it was preached by the Lord and His disciples, in the first part of this Gospel, but it is the kingdom in its condition during the absence of the King, that condition which we saw revealed in the thirteenth chapter. The teachings given now by the Lord concern the institution, which the Creator in His infinite wisdom had established in the beginning. Are the relationships of nature to be given up in the kingdom? Is there to be a change from that which God originally instituted? We shall learn that the Lord teaches that these natural relationships are not to be dissolved or set aside in the kingdom. We shall find, however, that we have here not the fullest teaching concerning these earthly relations. In the Epistles are given the exhortations to husbands, wives and children; and always after the Christian believer's position and standing has been clearly defined. To be in the kingdom does, therefore, not free from natural relationship. Indeed, it is just in these that the life of Christ in love, patience, meekness and forbearance is to be manifested. The exhortations in Ephesians, Romans, Colossians, Titus and other Epistles teach this most positively.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, He withdrew from Galilee, and came to the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan; and a great multitude followed Him, and He healed them there. And the Pharisees came to

Him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any cause?" (verses 1-3). Galilee is left now behind and He nears Judea and Jerusalem; and again He is followed by a multitude and many are healed by His loving hands and His divine power.

The subject of the earthly relationship instituted by God before the fall, called marriage, is brought into the foreground by tempting Pharisees. We have heard nothing of these enemies of the Lord since the beginning of the fifteenth chapter. These traditionalists and strong ritualists are now coming upon the scene again. Once more it is a question about their oral law, their man-made rules. He had silenced them about the Sabbath day and declared that He, the Son of Man, is Lord even of the Sabbath. When they came with the ridiculous tradition of the elders about the washing of hands, He had boldly declared, "Ye hypocrites!" and that they teach as doctrines the commandment of men. And now they are going to tempt Him once more. How awful this attempt appears when we consider the dignity of the person whom they try to tempt! He is the Wisdom, the Lord, who created all things; the one who instituted marriage and whose fingers wrote upon the tables of stone. Instead of worshipping Him and taking their place at His feet, to be taught by Him, they try in their blindness to ensnare Him. But why do they bring this special question about putting away a wife for any cause? Most likely the utterance of the Lord in the fifth chapter was reported to these men. There the Lawgiver Himself had declared: "It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a letter of divorce. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife except for cause of fornication makes her commit adultery, and whosoever marries one that is put away commits adultery" (v:31, 32). This word must have been a very hard saying

for those men, for it flatly contradicted the rabbinical sayings. And now they think they have a fine case against Him. If He but commits Himself on some of these fine rabbinical distinctions about the cause for divorce (later collected in the talmudical tract *Gittin*) they would have an accusation against Him.

Two great opinions divided then the Pharisees about divorce. Some held to the views of Hillel and others to the views of Shammai. Hillel had taught that indeed for almost every cause a wife may be put away. We care not to fill our space with a record of all the different causes for divorce and the rules, which the elders had laid down and which, at least among the extremely orthodox Jews, are still conscientiously followed.* The school of Hillel declared openly, and practised this, that if the wife cooks her husband's food badly, by over salting or over roasting it, she is to be put away. The school of Shammai, to which other Pharisees held, permitted not divorces except in the case of adultery. This will shed more light on the temptation of these Pharisees.

And now the Lord speaks in answer to their question: "But He, answering, said unto them, Have ye not read that He who made them from the beginning, made them male and female, and said, On account of this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh? What, therefore, God hath joined together, let

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*It has often been our experience to talk with some poor Jewish woman, left by her husband, who got a divorce from the rabbi. We remember one case where a man got a "*Gett*"—a bill of divorcement from his wife for an insignificant cause and came to this country to marry again. His divorced wife followed him here. These conditions have been quite a problem in New York courts.

not man separate" (verses 4-7). The Lord passes over all their scholastic reasonings; He ignores all their different opinions and has not a word to say about the law as given through Moses. He goes to the very beginning and shows marriage to be a divinely instituted relationship. And marriage, as instituted by the Creator, is an argument against both polygamy and divorce. Blessed institution indeed, and blessed fact, two shall be one flesh. In the new creation the relationship of marriage has a still deeper significance. The second half of Ephesians v acquaints us with what the believing husband and wife represent. Christ and the church and the love of Christ, the obedience of the church, the oneness which exists between Christ and the church, all practically to be seen in the relationship of husband and wife. "For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ, the church; for we are members of His body; of His flesh and of His bones. Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ and as to the church" (Eph. v:29-32). But the Pharisees have an answer ready. "They say to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a letter of divorce and to send her away?" But even in this they were erring. It was not a "command," but something which Moses allowed. The law had much to say about the suspicion of adultery, in which case the wife had to undergo a trial by the bitter waters (Num. v). Actual adultery was punishable by death. And so the Lord has His answer for their objection. "He says, Moses, in view of your hardheartedness, *allowed you* to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not thus. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry

another, commits adultery; and he who marries one put away commits adultery" (verses 8, 9).

Moses but allowed them divorce (Deut. xxiv:1). Adultery, however, such was the divine law, meant death. The Lord, now in His divine authority as the great "I am," gives a law about divorce, which is binding. Divorce, putting away a wife is wrong, except in case of unfaithfulness, adultery. All divorce for other causes is sin, and whosoever marries such a wrongly divorced person commits adultery. Many questions which arise here, difficulties in individual cases, complications of different nature, we must pass by. And yet we cannot conclude our meditation on these verses, without calling to mind the condition, which prevails about us, in professing Christendom, on these very things. The sacred institution of marriage has never been so misused as in these days. Society, so called, is corrupt in morals. Divorces and scandals are becoming almost fashionable. The frightful increase of unlawful divorces and prostitution is alarming to the moralist and reformer. We know, however, that it will be so in the last days, for He said, "As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh."

"His disciples say to Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. And He said to them, All cannot receive this word, but those to whom it has been given; for there are eunuchs, which have been born thus from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs of men; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs of themselves for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens." He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (verses 10-12).

The disciples, with their question, lay bare their own hearts. If such was the case, they think, that the best thing is not to marry at all. He speaks then of what incapaci-

tates for marriage. Some are unfitted for this divinely instituted relation by nature, others have been made so by wicked men, a custom still largely prevailing in the Orient. There is a third class who are exempt, and these are those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens. This does not mean mutilation. It means, no doubt, living in an unmarried state for the sake of the kingdom. It is not a law, not an obligation, nor a "sacrament." Celibacy is a man-made and wicked doctrine, contrary to Scripture. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." It is then something to be received, a gift from above. The grace and power of God is able to lift some to whom it is given, above the natural things of life. Paul undoubtedly was such a one to whom it was given. "For I would that all men were even as myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. . . . But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh; but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none. . . . But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord" (1 Cor. vii:7, 28-32).

And now the scene changes once more. The Pharisees with their temptation had been silenced by the Lord and their question resulted in definite teachings from the lips of the great Teacher concerning the institution of marriage in the kingdom. Another question is now to be answered by Him, the question of the relation of children to the kingdom. In the eighteenth chapter the Lord had put a little child in their midst and had said "Unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into

the kingdom of heaven;" but here little children are brought to Him.

"Then there were brought to Him little children, that He might lay His hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them" (verse 13). It was an old custom among the Jews to bring children to an acknowledged teacher and pious man, that he might pronounce a blessing upon them. The laying on of hands was done to symbolize the fulfilment of the blessing upon the head of the little one. These little ones were, therefore, not brought to Him for healing of any bodily disease, but they were brought to be blest by Him. Whose children they were is not stated. However, it is very improbable that they were the children of unbelieving Jews; these were rejecting the Lord and would hardly bring their little ones to Him. They must have been children of such, who believed in the Lord, and bringing these little ones to Him they manifested their faith that He would be willing to bless them and occupy Himself with them. Most likely the act of the Lord in putting the child in the midst of the disciples, and his previous teaching about the little ones, was an incentive to bring boldly the children to the Lord for a blessing. How strange once more the behavior of the disciples! The disciples rebuked them. They had listened to His gracious declarations about the little ones and how He told them, that he who humbles himself as a little child is the greatest in the kingdom, and yet they understood Him not. Did they want to keep an annoyance from the Lord? Was it a selfish motive which prompted them to act in this spirit? Perhaps they thought these little ones too insignificant, too unworthy for Him to bless. What could He do with these little ones?

This event brings out a very important and alas! too often forgotten declaration from our Lord. The declaration is that the little ones are recognized as the subjects of His

kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens. There is a place for little children in the kingdom; they are a part of it is the emphatic teaching of the passage before us.

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children and do not hinder them from coming to me, for the kingdom of the heavens is of such; and having laid His hands upon them, He departed thence." With such a definite word it seems next to impossible that anyone could doubt the love of God for the little ones. Still it has been done; there is an interpretation of the gracious words of our Lord, which makes the little children types of believers, and that only such who have believed are meant. In Mark and in Luke (Mark xx:13; Luke xviii:15) the Lord adds, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein," but here no such addition is given by the Holy Spirit, because it concerns the relation of actual little ones to the kingdom. The Lord takes up these little ones and approves of the faith, which had presented them to Him for a blessing. He puts His hands upon them and declares that these little ones are a part of the kingdom. How much like Him who loves to take up that which is weak and lowly! The passage is sufficient to teach believers that the Lord Jesus Christ has a loving interest in the little ones, looks upon them as belonging to His kingdom and is ready to bless them. But where is the faith from the side of believing parents, fully entering into His thoughts and looking upon the little ones as in the kingdom presenting these to Himself? Alas! how great the failure! He tells us of His willingness to receive them, that they are subjects of His kingdom and faith should act upon this and put them into His loving hands. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house" (Acts xvi:31). Faith should take hold of this gracious family promise and claim it. Of

course, this does not say that personal faith is unnecessary from the side of children.

In the epistles we find children mentioned. In the epistle, which contains God's highest revelation, Ephesians, children are treated as belonging to the Lord in the believing family. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment which has a promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest be long-lived on the earth. And ye fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. vi:1-4). The last means to instruct them in the things of the Lord. We have come occasionally in touch with good Christian people, who declared it wrong to teach a child to pray and who refused to tell little ones to pray to God. As far as certain forms of prayers are concerned we are, of course, fully agreed that a parrot-like repetition of prayers is to be avoided and harmful. But to teach the child prayer, the expression of weakness and dependence on God, as well as confidence in Him, is the first lesson to be taught. We think it a wrong, where this is not done. No day should pass in the home of believers, where the Word is not read and the knees of all bow before Him, who is the Head over all, the Lord Jesus Christ. And if through the grace of God the sweet instructions of Ephesians v:22-32 are carried out in the Christian family, the home will become a place of fragrance, influence and blessing.

But now we behold another one appearing, one who had been a little one, a young man, and he is asking the way to eternal life. "And lo, one coming up said to Him, Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have life eternal? And He said to him, What askest thou me concerning goodness? One is good. But if thou wouldst enter

into life, keep the commandments. He says to Him, Which? And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man says to Him, All these have I kept; what lack I yet? Jesus said to him, If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me. But the young man, having heard the word, went away grieved, for he had large possessions" (verses 16-23).

This is a most instructive incident. It is a striking portrayal of many who are in the professing sphere, in Christendom, their natural and moral condition; and the teaching of the incident is, that salvation is not of man, not depending on the deeds of man, but salvation is of God.

The young man is a typical religious, moral and natural man. In the Gospel of Mark we read, that he came running and kneeled down and that the Lord loved him; and in Luke we find that he was a young ruler, holding an ecclesiastical position. The question is the all important one for the religious man, the question of how to obtain eternal life. He is in ignorance about eternal life. In spite of all his religious observations, his position, his good moral qualities, he had no certainty, no assurance of life eternal; though a member of the professing people of God, he gropes in the dark. And is this not the case of the so-called Christian masses of our day? He furthermore expects eternal life from God as the reward of having done some good thing. He wants to earn eternal life, "do and live," as the law demands. He is ignorant of the great fundamental fact, that he is with all his religiousness and good moral qualities a guilty and lost sinner. He does not know (the blindness of the natural man) that he never did a good thing,

which pleased God and that he can never do any good thing from himself. And this is equally true of a large number of subjects in the kingdom of heaven, who are mere professors of Christianity and who are unsaved and strangers to the grace of God. And now the Lord's dealing with him. He gives him, first of all, to understand that only One is good and that One is, of course, God. "Good master," said he, according to the other record. He looked upon the Lord as a good man merely, and this He at once repudiates. God alone is good, and the One the young man addressed is "God manifested in the flesh." He was ignorant of His person. The Lord then meets him on his own ground. The ground upon which he stands is the law, and with the law the Lord answers his question. How else could He treat him? The first need for him was to know himself a *lost* and *helpless* sinner. If the Lord had spoken of His grace, of eternal life as a free gift, he would not have understood Him at all. The law was needed to make known to him his desperate condition and to lay bare his heart. And the Lord who searches the hearts does this for him. With a few sentences he uncovers the true state of the young man, who leaves Him grieved, full of sorrow; he had many possessions and he would not part with them. He had declared that he loved his neighbor as himself; had he done so he would have readily sold his possessions, given them to the poor and followed the Lord. As a natural man, he could not and would not do it.

In type this young, religious man "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," stands for the self-righteous Jewish people, turned away from the Lord with sorrow and yet loved by Him.

"And Jesus said to His disciples, Verily, I say unto you, a rich man shall with difficulty enter into the kingdom of

the heavens, and again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to enter a needle's eye than a rich man into the kingdom of God" (verses 23, 24). The verse tells us that the natural man, like the rich ruler, burdened by his possessions and under the control of the world and the god of this age, cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The illustration of the camel and the needle's eye was a well-known Jewish phrase in the days of our Lord. It is an impossible thing that a camel laden down with goods could pass through the eye of a needle; just as impossible is it for the natural rich man to enter the kingdom of God. In astonishment the disciples now turn to the Lord with the question, a question perfectly in order after such a solemn declaration. "And when the disciples heard it they were exceedingly astonished, saying, Who, then, can be saved? But Jesus, looking on them, said, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (verses 25, 26). Here is a bright and glorious flashing forth of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. His words are a blessed indication of what His loving heart knew so well, that salvation is of God. With men salvation is impossible, to get into the kingdom of God an impossibility, but God, in His marvelous grace in Christ Jesus has made it possible. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And now the last paragraph of this most interesting chapter.

It is Peter once more who steps into the foreground as mouthpiece of the disciples. Again he acts and speaks in the flesh. Indeed, all through this Gospel Peter shows himself self-centered and self-seeking and intruding in that spirit into the things of the Lord. Only once was this not the case, and that was when the Father in heaven had given to him the revelation concerning His Son (Matt. xvi). With what selfconsciousness and feeling of superiority Peter

must have looked upon the young ruler as he sneaked away with hanging head. And then, instead of bowing in silence and wonder after the Lord had flashed forth His grace and truth, he thinks of himself. "*Then,* Peter answering said to Him, Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee; what then shall happen to us?" Self is here prominently before us. But the Lord in His graciousness is far from rebuking Peter; He makes the self-gratifying question the basis of still further teaching by speaking of the future rewards of His own who follow Him and share His rejection.

"And Jesus said to them, Verily, I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit down upon His throne of glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life. But many first shall be last, and last first" (verses 28-30). Here is the declaration of an important principle, the principle of rewards in glory. Whatever a disciple, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ has done or suffered for His sake will not be forgotten. This, however, does not mean that we can earn a position in glory; it is grace and grace alone, which has brought us there. Service and self-denial of a believer are the results of grace, and so the rewards are mercies, nothing else. But it is glorious to think, He remembers all, yea even the cup of cold water given in His name and for all we shall find in His presence a recompense.

Besides the principle of rewards we have here dispensational teachings. The Lord speaks of the time of regeneration. There is a time of regeneration coming, when all things will be made over, when groaning creation is de-

livered and the reign of Satan and of sin ends. It is the millennial age. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets declare this great regeneration, in the promises, which are so universally spiritualized in our day. This regeneration is not yet; and it cannot come as long as the Son of Man does not occupy the throne of His glory. He will not occupy that throne as long as His fellow heirs are not with Him. Everything then in its order. The completion of the church, as to numbers, the removal of the church to meet Him in the air, His coming with His saints in glory, His own throne, which He will occupy and then, and not before, the regeneration.

The promise here to the disciples is a specific one for them, and does not mean other believers. In the kingdom, the reign of Christ over the earth, the disciples will hold a glorious position in connection with the government of the earth through Israel and occupy twelve thrones. The saints will judge the world. As He received of His Father, so shall the overcomer receive from His hands. (Rev. ii:26-28.)

We have gone through a most blessed chapter in which all is connected by the Holy Spirit. The teaching is continued in the next, and the last sentence of the nineteenth chapter belongs to the twentieth chapter. "But many first shall be last, and last first," its meaning is explained by the Lord in a parable.

CHAPTER XX.

The Lord had spoken about the rewards to be given at the time when the kingdom is to be established on the earth in power and glory, the time of regeneration. His last word in the nineteenth chapter was the statement, "many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." If we turn to our chapter we find the same words again. "*So* the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called ones, but few are chosen ones" (verse 16). It is evident by the word "*so*" that the Lord gives us the interpretation of this sentence in the first part of the twentieth chapter, and, as already indicated, the last verse of the nineteenth chapter belongs properly to the beginning of the chapter which follows. A parable it is by which the Lord continues to teach about the rewards of the kingdom. "But many first shall be last, and last first. For the kingdom of the heavens is like a householder who went out with the early morning to hire workmen for his vineyard. And having agreed with the workmen for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And having gone out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market place idle; and to them he said: Go also ye into the vineyard, and whatsoever may be just I will give you. And they went their way. Again, having gone out about the sixth and ninth hour, he did likewise. But about the eleventh hour, having gone out, he found others standing, and says to them, Why stand ye here all day idle? They say to him, because no man has hired us. He says to them, Go also ye into the vineyard and whatsoever may be just ye shall receive. But when

the evening was come the Lord of the vineyard says to his steward, Call the workmen and pay them their wages, beginning from the last even to the first. And when they who came to work about the eleventh hour came, they received each a denarius. And when the first came they supposed that they would receive more, and they received also themselves each a denarius. And on receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, saying, these last have worked one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. But he, answering, said to one of them, My friend, I do not wrong thee. Didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is thine and go. But it is my will to give to this last even as to thee, is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first and the first last; for many are called ones, but few chosen ones."

This parable has difficulties to many readers of the Bible, and all kinds of interpretations have been attempted. Some of these are altogether wrong and contradict Scripture. Among them we mention the exposition of the denarius or penny to mean eternal life and salvation. Thus Luther states on this parable, and after him many other commentators, "the penny which each receives, whether he has labored much or little, is His Son Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, His Holy Spirit, and finally He gives eternal life." That this is wrong needs hardly to be mentioned. The salvation of the sinner is here not at all in view. If it were true that the penny, which all receive alike, means salvation, then salvation would have to be worked for and earned by man as a laborer. This strikes at grace and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. No, the question of the parable is not the question of salvation.

Again, others, recognizing that it is about rewards in the kingdom of which the Lord speaks, have claimed that the teaching is that there will be no diversities or degrees of rewards in the kingdom, but all will receive alike from the hands of the Lord. This, too, is wrong, for it is in opposition to the teachings of the Scriptures. The difficulty of this parable will easily be overcome, if we take into consideration that a parable is an allegorical representation by which a principle is demonstrated or a moral is drawn for instruction. It is, therefore, not at all correct to think that everything in a parable must have a specific meaning and must be spiritually applied. As soon as we enter into the details of this parable and attempt a detailed exposition and try to make an application of these, we shall miss the true lesson, and, perhaps, in the attempt, teach exactly the opposite from what the Lord teaches. We do not think that the penny, or, as it is correctly translated, denarius, has a special spiritual meaning at all. It simply stands for something received. Men have tried to ascertain the time when the laborers were hired, what is meant by the morning, by the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour and the eleventh. Some have fixed these different hours and declare that the early morning laborers were the apostles, the early Christians, and the eleventh hour workers, the laborers living in our days. Now, if we are authorized to seek a meaning in all these terms and give it such an interpretation, then we must do so with every statement found here. According to this the early morning workers would murmur in the presence of the Lord of the vineyard, then there would be murmuring in the day when the rewards are distributed.

We have to pass over the details and look for the great lesson which our teacher desires to bring to our hearts in this parable.

We have already shown how closely the parable is con-

nected with the events recorded at the close of the previous chapter. There one, who was rich in himself and knew not his true condition, and rich in possessions, had gone away sorrowful from the Lord; and the Lord had declared, while salvation is impossible with men, all things are possible with God. Salvation is of God. It is grace which has saved us. "For ye are saved by grace, through faith" (Eph. ii:8). That grace has brought salvation, what all is included in this we cannot follow here. But then one, a saved one, Peter, spoke and though it was self which uttered these words, the Lord gave Peter and the disciples a gracious answer. He assured them that there was a time coming when they should receive a reward and that He would not forget the service, self-denial and sacrifice of His own.

But with this declaration, so comforting to the hearts of the disciples, there is a great danger connected. The danger is that the believer may forget that he is a debtor to grace and to grace alone, that all he has, he is and he ever will be in all eternity is the result of grace. He may become occupied with his service, his sacrifice and expecting rewards, lose sight of grace and become thoroughly self-righteous. God does not want us to get our hearts away from His riches of grace in Christ Jesus. He is delighted with His children when they magnify that wonderful grace, when they cast themselves upon it; never can we make too much of grace. To keep the disciple from a spirit of self-righteousness as well as occupation with service and rewards, the Lord brings in this parable. The great principle which He teaches is, that God will give the rewards in His own sovereignty, as it seems best to Him, never out of harmony with His wonderful justice. "Should not the judge of the whole earth do right?" (Gen. xviii:25.) "The principle is this, that while God owns every service and loss for the sake of Christ, yet He maintains His own title to do as He will."

While we labor, our labor is not to be for the sake of reward, as one who is hired for a certain sum of money. We are to be laborers with no trace of legality about us. The servant, the laborer who has the thought before the soul to earn something by his service and sacrifice, lives but to himself, and would be *only* a hired servant, which the believer is not. Such a one, though he has stood the heat and burden of the day, would find the Lord acting on the principle expounded here by Himself. He will hear from Him: "Take what is thine and go. But if it is my will to give to this last even as to thee; is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs?" The Lord wants us to trust grace and trust the rewards, the recompense to Him and His own will to give as it pleases Him, and not think anything of our service. Thus the parable appears as a rebuke to Peter, who was occupied with what he had given up.

"The *first* shall be last;" thus the parable began, and it indicates the human failure. At the end of the parable the order is reversed, the *last* shall be first; the Lord, in His sovereign grace will lift up those who trusted in His grace. "Many are called, but few are chosen ones," which has nothing to do with salvation, but is in connection with rewards.

And now we are told that the Lord went up to Jerusalem, and as He directs His steps there He announces once more the fact of His coming passion, death and resurrection. "And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples with Him apart in the way, and said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death; and they will deliver Him up to the nations to mock and to scourge and to crucify, and the third day He shall rise again" (verses 17-19). And as He uttered these solemn words, His soul knew all what it meant for

Him and the bitter cup He was to drink to the very last drop. Some have taught and teach that it dawned upon Him gradually and that He was not conscious of all which was before Him. But He knew everything which would happen to Him in Jerusalem, for His own Spirit had revealed these sufferings in the prophets (1 Pet. i:11). What awe and silence must have rested upon the disciples as He acquainted them with the path He was to go! In Mark we read that they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid (Mark x:32). In the Gospel of Luke the Holy Spirit gives additional information: "And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken" (Luke xviii:34). He alone knew the meaning of all before Him, and as the hour draweth near, for which He had come into the world, when He was to be delivered up and to die, we see Him setting His face like a flint to go to Jerusalem.

But now we hear the silence broken. It is a woman who approaches Him. "Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, doing homage and asking something of Him. And He said to her, What wilt thou? She says to Him, Speak the Word that these, my two sons, may sit, one on thy right hand and one on thy left in thy kingdom" (verses 20, 21). Self-seeking, the ambition of the flesh, is here again in evidence. Most likely the words of our Lord in answer to Peter's words in chapter xix prompted this desire. He had spoken of those that followed Him, that, in the regeneration, they should occupy twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. This word impressed itself, no doubt, upon the mother of the sons of Zebedee, as well as upon the sons themselves, John and James. It was a custom of Oriental kings to have a person sit at their right hand and one on the left; and so the wish is uttered for places of honor in His Kingdom. The mother

of Zebedee's sons here leads; from the Gospel of Mark we learn that John and James made the request. This is no discrepancy, as often called by unbelievers in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Both mother and sons came together, having both the same wish. The mother's desire and request was the desire and request of the sons. In Mark's Gospel the sons are in the foreground, and in Matthew the mother. This is seen by the fact that the Lord does not answer the mother at all. And the ten were indignant about the two brothers. The parable the Lord had just given concerning the workmen in the vineyard was not understood by them all. The request is the manifestation of self. Peter had been uncovered in the presence of the Lord, and now we find that in the beloved disciple, in John and in James, the same evil thing is present. But all brings out His own perfection and His glory; the imperfection and selfishness of His disciples reveals His perfection.

"And Jesus, answering, said, Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink the cup which I am about to drink? They say to Him, We are able; He says to them, Ye shall drink indeed my cup, and to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared by my Father" (verses 22-24).* How lovingly and with what patience He reproves her. There is no harshness about it, but it is all tenderness and grace. They did, indeed, know not what they asked. He asks them if they could drink the cup He was about to drink. A cup was to be drunk by Him, and this cup stands for all the agony He was about to suffer. They knew nothing of that

*The words "and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," are left out, also the same words in the 23d verse. They are an interpolation in Matthew.

cup He was about to drink; nothing of the suffering and the cross which was before Him. It was their own selfishness and a presumption that they answered in the affirmative. They think they are able without knowing what the cup was.

He tells them that they should indeed drink His cup. They were to be partakers of His sufferings and have fellowship with it. That this does not mean the sufferings our Lord had to undergo from the side of God is evident. He alone could suffer thus, and no human being could follow Him there. They would drink His cup, which not alone contained the suffering from God, but sufferings from men, rejection, reproach, and much else besides. In His rejection and sufferings from men they had to enter in. And to this we are also called. "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. ii:21). Paul speaks of the sufferings of Christ. "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i:24). "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii:10).

And now we see the place the Lord Jesus Christ takes in His humiliation. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. To say that He did not know to whom the places of honor in the kingdom belonged, or that He has no right to give these places and bestow these honors, would be dishonoring to His person. He both knew it, and had a right to place in the seats of honor whomsoever He chooses. He had humbled Himself and had come to exalt the Father, and here He shows forth His place He had taken. He declares in that perfect humilia-

tion that it is not for Him to give these places, but for the Father. Here is a marvelous depth of precious truth. The One equal with the Father in all eternity, One with the Father, truly God in all eternity, without any beginning, came and humbled Himself, made of Himself no reputation. He came to do the will of the Father to the Glory and Praise of His name. He put Himself in the place of humiliation, under the Father, though ever Jehovah while in the earth. Raised from the dead, highly exalted, seated on the right hand of God, though absolutely and eternally one with God, the Father, He yet, as *glorified Man,* does the Father's will, subject to the Father. When every knee at last bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, it will be to the glory of God the Father. It is the glory of the Father which is His aim. In this light 1 Cor. xv:27, 28 are correctly understood: "For He (the Father) hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is exempted, which did put all things under Him." The Father is meant and the Son of God *incarnate,* as glorified Man is under Him, though as God the Son absolutely One with the Father. But still more: "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him, that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Such passages have ever been used by the subtlety of the enemy to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of His absolute Deity. So has the word in our chapter been construed to mean that the Lord is inferior to the Father.

"And the ten, having heard of it, were indignant about the two brothers" (verse 24). This is a verse which tells us much. One could easily draw a picture of the ten Jews, how they gesticulated and showed their indignation by looks and words. What kind of an indignation was it? Did perhaps Peter say, "too bad for John and James to

intrude thus upon the Lord, and after He made such an announcement to disturb Him; and then the mother came also; what do they mean anyway by such a selfish desire?" did he speak thus? We think not. Most likely Peter was very much occupied with his own case, and the words, "keys of kingdom," were ringing in his ears. The pride in these two they most likely recognized, as well as the forwardness of the mother. It was, however, their own pride which moved them to indignation. And thus it is repeated over and over again. The fault-finding spirit is rarely anything less than the manifestation of the same evil. What often a brother accuses his brother of is just that what he himself does.

This indignation of the disciples brings out another gracious instruction from the Lord. Once more he teaches in perfect patience His poor erring ones. And oh! Praise to His name! He is ever the same. We are all His dull and weak disciples, and the graciousness and patience He manifests here He has manifested towards us a thousand times. And still He teaches; He bears us and treats us with such loving tenderness. Why do we not learn from Him how to deal with a weak and erring brother?

"But Jesus, having called them to Him, said, Ye know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It shall not be thus amongst you, but whosoever will be great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your bondman; as, indeed, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (verses 25-28).

The mistake the disputing disciples had made was to think of His Kingdom, like the kingdoms of the nations. He dispels this conception; it would be the very opposite from what it is in the kingdoms of the nations. The greatest

in His Kingdom are those who are servants and the bondman is the first. He Himself, the Son of Man, came to serve. Blessed words are these indeed, lowering all that is of self, dethroning pride and ambition, teaching us to let this mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus.

The closing scene of this chapter is the healing of the two blind men. The Lord is departing with His disciples from Jericho, followed by a great multitude, going up to Jerusalem to fulfil all that which was written concerning Him. The incident before us is the beginning of the end and one of the last miracles of healing recorded in this Gospel.

"And as they went out from Jericho a great multitude followed Him. And lo, two blind men, sitting by the wayside, having heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David. But the multitude rebuked them, that they might be silent. But they cried out the more, saying, Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David. And Jesus, having stopped, called them and said, What will ye that I shall do to you? They say to Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. And Jesus, moved with compassion, touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes had sight restored to them, and they followed Him" (verses 29-34).

We had before a similar miracle in this Gospel. In the ninth chapter, when Jesus departed, two blind men followed Him, and they, too, cried to Him as Son of David, and He touched and healed them (chapter ix:27-31). The miracle there preceded the sending out of the twelve to preach that the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. Here the healing of the two blind men stands at the close of the Galilean ministry and precedes His triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

It has significance in different directions. These two men

were witnesses to Him. They cried to Him as Lord and Son of David. When in Cæsarea Philippi He had asked His disciples what men say of Him. The answer showed then that His own knew Him not. None said that He is the Son of David, His messianic title. Before a Gentile, the Canaanitish woman, had called to Him as Lord, Son of David, and He had not answered till she had dropped "Son of David." There was no confession from the side of the multitudes of Him as Son of David, no appeal to Him as such. This fully shows the condition of the people, the great multitude who had seen Him, beheld His miracles and heard His words. They did not believe on Him as the promised One, the Son of David, the King and Redeemer of Israel. Quite true we read in the next chapter that the multitudes who went before Him and who followed cried, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" But this never came from the heart. It was the temporary enthusiasm of a great multitude of excitable Jews. Soon their cry changes and they say: "This is Jesus the prophet, who is from Nazareth of Galilee!"

While then the great mass of people presses around Him, following Him from Jericho, there comes the voice of the two blind men, moved, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit, and they confess Him as Son of David. Had they cried to Him as Jesus of Nazareth or simply as "Lord" their witness would have not fitted into the scene at all. But as Son of David and Heir to the Throne of David, He was to be presented to Jerusalem, and ere this takes place He has the witness of *two* witnesses that He is the Son of David. According to the law the testimony of two witnesses was necessary. The Holy Spirit here supplies these in the cry of the two blind men at the wayside. This is the reason why two blind men are mentioned exclusively in the first Gospel, the Jewish Gospel, while Luke and Mark speak of only the one. And so while the Lord is on His way to

Jerusalem and no voice from the multitude is heard declaring Him and confessing Him as Son of David, and therefore as the King, a confession from these two sitting in darkness is heard.

That these men had heard of Him is evident, that their chief desire was to be healed is equally certain; and they had faith in Him, that He could do it, but it was the Holy Spirit who put that confession and cry in their hearts and lips: "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David." And the multitude rebuked them that they might be silent. Surely this is proof enough of the unbelief and condition of this great company of people following Him. Why should they have rebuked these men, commanding them to be silent, if they had shared the faith of these two? The confession of this Jesus as "Son of David" was obnoxious to the multitude. But they could not be silenced. The Holy Spirit had moved them, and as they are rebuked they cry the more with their solemn witness, "Son of David."

And full of compassion He touched them, and their sight was restored. We have learned before the typical meaning of healing by touch in this Gospel. Whenever the Lord heals by touch it has reference, dispensationally, to His personal presence on the earth and His merciful dealing with Israel. When He heals by His Word, absent in person, as it is in the case of the Centurian's servant, and the Canaanitish woman, or if He is touched in faith, it refers to the time when He is absent from the earth, and Gentiles approaching Him in faith are healed by Him.

Now here we have a dispensational foreshadowing, the importance of which should not be overlooked. These two blind men sitting at the wayside, groping in the dark, crying to the Son of David for deliverance, are types of the poor and feeble remnant of Israel in the end of this age, after the testimony of the church for Christ the Son of God by resurrection from the dead, has been finished and the

church is no longer upon this scene. That remnant of Israel will cry to Him as Son of David and call upon Him for deliverance. The entrance of Jerusalem, which follows in the next chapter, foreshadows also that coming of the Son of David to Jerusalem, when He comes as King crowned with honor and glory. And as the two blind ones called upon Him when He was on the way to Jerusalem, and He heard and delivered them, so will that remnant of His earthly people seek Him, and in that darkness which precedes His return to Jerusalem cry to the Son of David, without seeing Him in person, though they believe on Him, that He is the promised One. And as the cry of the blind men was the work of the Holy Spirit, so will the seeking, the longing, the prayer of that future remnant be produced by the Spirit of God.

The multitudes which rebuked the two at the wayside and tried to silence them foreshadows that part of the people of Israel, which in that great tribulation remains in unbelief and which hates their own brethren, who are expecting the Coming of the Messiah and cry to him for deliverance. In Isaiah lxvi we read of this: "Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His Word. Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let Jehovah be glorified, and let us see your joy! But they shall be ashamed" (Isa. lxvi:5). Those in Israel, who at the end time tremble at His Word are the godly remnant. They are hated by their own brethren and are cast out. They also mock at them and their expectation; but they shall be ashamed.

The two blind men were healed and followed Him. Their eyes were suddenly opened. So shall the remnant behold Him, and as, no doubt, these two were witnesses of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and shouted out the Praise and Glory of His name, so will the delivered remnant of Israel sing forth His Praises.

CHAPTER XXI.

We are now reaching the beginning of the end. The King with His disciples draws near to Jerusalem to hold his triumphant royal entry into the city, and to be presented as King to the same. What scenes have passed before our eyes in the study of the Gospel. We have followed the mighty events connected with the manifestation of the King in the midst of His people, the miracles of messianic power, which demonstrated before the eyes of Israel that He is Jehovah. We learned how the kingdom was preached and rejected; how His own to whom He came received Him not. In all these events and miracles the most complete dispensational facts were seen foreshadowed, while we learned the same facts from the Words and parables of the King. We are in the last stage now, one intensely interesting, of great importance and solemn meaning. May He Himself through His Spirit open this Gospel still more to our understanding and give us much light and great blessing through the meditation on His Word.

His entry into Jerusalem, which is before us first of all, was witnessed by immense multitudes of people, as we shall learn from the text. Criticism has given a strange motive for the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. It has been said that He was carried away by enthusiasm and expected that the people would now surely receive Him as the Messiah-King; while other critics explained His entry to the city as a kind of a concession to the messianic expectations of His disciples. How dishonoring to Him are all such foolish speculation. The simple fact is that He is the King and as

such He had to come to Jerusalem and fulfill that which had been predicted by Zechariah, the prophet.

"And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, at the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go into the village over against you, and immediately ye will find an ass tied, and a colt with it; loose them and lead them to me. And if anyone say anything to you, ye shall say, The Lord has need of them, and straightway he will send them. But all this came to pass, that that might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, Say to the daughters of Zion, Behold they King cometh to Thee, meek and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Verses 1-5.)

"Bethphage" means "house of unripe figs," surely significant if we consider the typical meaning of the fig tree, and the cursing of the fig tree, which is recorded in the chapter. From this place He sends forth His two disciples to bring the colt and the ass to Him. This act of the Lord flashes forth once more His Glory and that the King-Messiah is Jehovah. He knew that yonder was an ass tied with a colt as He knew the fish and the piece of silver in the sea, and as He commanded the fish with the stater to go to Peter's hook so here He demands the use of the ass and colt; He has a right to them for He is the Creator and He can say as He has said: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I *know* all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine" (Ps. 1:10, 11). In Mark's Gospel we read, "And they found the colt bound to the door without at the crossway and they loose him. And some of those standing there said to them, What are you doing loosing the colt? And they said to them as Jesus had commanded them. And they let them do it" (Mark xi:4-7). No doubt the majestic "The Lord has need of them" made such a deep impression upon the hearts

of these men who either owned the colt or had charge of it, that they were ready at once to let them go. It was His Word which demanded obedience and which was obeyed.

But the whole scene had been predicted in the Old Testament and here in the Gospel of the King this prophecy is put into the foreground. The quotation refers us to Zechariah ix. We shall quote the whole prophecy:

"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion,
Shout aloud daughter of Jerusalem,
Behold thy King cometh to thee,
Just and having salvation,
Meek and riding upon an ass,
Even upon a colt, the she-ass's foal."

This prophecy stands in contrast to the Grecian conqueror, mentioned in the first part of the ninth chapter of Zechariah. The Jews acknowledged that the words are a messianic prophecy. One of the leading Jewish commentators* says, "It is impossible to interpret it of any other than King Messiah."

The Jews have also an interesting legend, though foolish, which claims that the ass upon which King Messiah rides is the same which Abraham saddled when he went on the way to offer up Isaac and that is the same animal which Moses used. This shows how firmly the Jews believe in Zechariah (ix:9-10) as a messianic prediction. But we noticed that only part of the original prophecy is quoted in Matthew. The Holy Spirit leaves out "Just and having salvation." In these omissions the critics as well as other unbelievers in the inspiration of the Bible scent discrepancies and errors. But recently a professor made the statement that the writers of the New Testament had a limited and imperfect knowledge

*Solomon Ben Jarchi commonly known as Rashi.

of the Old Testament Scriptures and he tried to prove his assertion by the quotations found in the New Testament. But Matthew, Mark, John, Peter or Paul did not write themselves, but it is the Holy Spirit who used them as an instrument. It is not Matthew or Paul quoting the Old Testament, but the same Spirit of God who gave the Old Testament Scriptures through the prophets, quotes in the New His own utterances. And while these critics see nothing but imperfection in these quotations the true believer sees nothing but perfection in them and finds here a strong argument for verbal inspiration. It is so in the passage before us. Man would have quoted every word from Zechariah's prophecy, but the Spirit of God leaves out "just and having salvation" because this was not to come to Jerusalem then, for Jerusalem would not have the King. The King is coming again to Jerusalem and then when He comes riding the white horse (Rev. xix) all that which is not yet fulfilled in Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled. Then it shall be as we read in the context:

"And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

The Talmudists have labored to overcome the difficulty which they have concerning the coming of the Messiah, when they consider (Daniel vii:13) that He comes in the clouds of Heaven, and in Zechariah that He comes riding upon an ass. "If the Israelites are good then He shall come in the clouds of heaven, but if not good, then riding upon an ass."* We return to the account before us.

"But the disciples having gone and done as Jesus had

*Sanhedrin Tract.

ordered them, brought the ass and the colt and put their garments upon them and sat on them. But a very great multitude strewed their own garments on the way, and others kept cutting down branches from the trees and strewing them on the way. And the multitudes who went before Him, and who followed cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed be He, who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest. And so He entered into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved saying, Who is this? And the multitudes said, This is the Prophet, who is from Nazareth of Galilee."

What a sight this must have been to behold! How eager the disciples were to act their parts. No doubt enthusiastic Peter was here in the lead, only too ready to put His Lord into the place of authority. The multitude was very great. Large numbers had followed Him from Jericho, while equally large numbers came forth from the City. Large numbers of pilgrims had come to Jerusalem for the feast, among them many, no doubt, who had seen Jesus and had witnessed His mighty miracles in Galilee. The news of the resurrection of Lazarus, which is not reported in our Gospel, because it belongs properly only in the fourth Gospel record, had spread throughout Jerusalem and when the news reached there that He was coming near the city, ready to hold his entry, thousands went forth to meet Him. The garments were spread in the way; it was an Oriental custom to put before the feet of kings costly rugs and the multitudes followed this custom by putting their garments down. What a sight it must have been—the thousands coming to meet Him with Palm branches in their hands, waving them over their heads, while the multitudes which followed did the same. And then they broke out in the glad shouts, quoting partly from the cxviii Psalm "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the

Lord! Hosanna in the Highest." Hosanna means "save now." The phrase "Hosanna" is used by the Jews at the feast of tabernacles and the waving of the palms reminds one also of that feast, which has such a prophetic significance. It will be kept throughout the Millennium and the nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord of hosts. According to Jewish tradition the cxviii Psalm was also chanted when the people came forth from Jerusalem to meet the pilgrims. And this foreshadows also His second coming. But how different the scene will be then. He comes forth out of the opened heavens, riding upon a white horse; Jerusalem will be besieged and in great distress; a great multitude will accompany Him from above, His many sons, the Saints as well as angels; the remnant of Israel will cry out "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

When that wonderful entry took place, the King riding upon the colt, and the whole city was moved as by a mighty earthquake, His enemies declared amongst themselves, "Behold, the world is gone after Him" (John xii:19). What a triumph it was! The King entering Jerusalem. And in all He is undisturbed. Others might have been swept away by this enthusiasm; but He is calm in all His kingly majesty. Luke's gospel tells us that He wept. "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it." And what kind of weeping was this? He wept at the grave of Lazarus and that was a still, a silent weeping. But before Jerusalem He broke out in loud and deep lamentations. This is clearly proven by the different words used in the original.

The King knew what was soon to be, and on yonder hill He saw looming up the cross. True, they were crying, "Son of David, save now!" But the question, "Who is this?" is answered in the terms of rejection. Instead of

"the King, Jehovah-Jesus, the Messiah," the multitude answers "Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

The first errand of the King in His city is the temple. "And Jesus entered into the temple of God, and cast out all that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those that sold the doves. And He says to them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers" (verses 12-13). This is the second time that the Lord acted in cleansing the temple. The first is recorded in the Gospel of John (ii:13, 17), and it took place at the beginning of His ministry. There it is the zeal for God's house, but here He acts in all His Kingly authority. How great and awful must have been the defilement of God's temple in those days. Money changers were undoubtedly in the foreground, for money played then in the days of the Jewish apostasy as important a role as it does in the apostasy we witness about us. "We can picture to ourselves the scene around the table of an eastern money changer—the weighing of the coins, deductions for loss of weight, arguing, disputing, bargaining, and we realize the terrible truthfulness of our Lord's charge that they had made the Father's house a mart and a place of traffic."* And besides the money changers were those who bought and sold. All that which was required for the meat and drink offering was for sale by the Temple authorities. With the sale much speculation was connected; covetousness, as Jewish talmudical writings prove, was the ruling passion in this blasphemous traffic. And the most awful fact was that the priesthood, especially the High-priestly family earned riches from it. The Bazaars and the Temple markets were controlled and owned by the sons of Annas.

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*Edersheim: Life of Christ, Vol. I., 369.

Into this scene of desecration He enters. No whip of cords is in His hands; the King does not need it. The tables are turned over in wild confusion; the coins roll over the pavement, while the sacrificial animals and birds are driven out, perhaps in a wild stampede, followed by their owners and the officials of the temple. And what He uses is His own Word. "It is written my house shall be called an house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of robbers." It was His house, as well as His Father's. Of old in the first house His own Glory appeared and dwelt there. The words "mine house shall be called an house of prayer" are found in Isaiah lvi:7. "For all people" which is in Isaiah, the Lord does not quote. That temple was not meant to be a house "for all people;" the temple in Is. lvi:7 is the millennial temple, and that future temple will be the house to which the nations of the earth will come during the coming age, to worship the Lord of Hosts.

And so the Lord came suddenly to His temple to cleanse it (Mal. iii:1-3). But this again is only a shadow of another coming and the final fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the third chapter of Malachi. Another temple will stand in Jerusalem during the great tribulation and there will be even greater defilement. In that temple one will sit who is clearly pictured in the Word. "That man of sin, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing Himself that He is God" (2 Thess. ii:3, 4). Him the Lord will destroy with the brightness of His coming.

But a more refreshing scene follows. The temple is cleansed. The noise and confusion is at an end. Nothing is said of the return of these evil occupants. But instead of them, there came the blind and the lame to Him in the temple and He healed them. The vacancy was filled by the

crowd of poor, stricken, suffering ones, who were delivered of their pains and diseases. Blessed and glorious foreshadowing of what will be when He comes again and when by His life-giving, healing touch, He will cure "all diseases" and make perfectly whole. And still another thing happens. "And when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders which He wrought, and the children crying in the temple and saying 'Hosanna to the Son of David' they were indignant, and said to Him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus says to them, Yes; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Verses 15, 16.) The children sang their Hosanna to Him, the Son of David, and our Lord refers the murmuring, accusing chief priests and scribes to the eighth Psalm. The meaning of that Psalm is clearly established by the second chapter of Hebrews. It is Jesus, the Son of Man, who is here seen in His dominion over the earth. When at last He has all things under His feet, there will be a silencing of the enemy by perfect praise. The praise of the children foreshadows the praise He will receive when He comes again.

Beautifully Edersheim in his excellent work describes this scene. "It was truly spring time in that temple, and the boys had gathered about their fathers and looked from their faces of wrapt wonderment and enthusiasm to the Godlike face of the Christ, and then on those healed sufferers, took up the echoes of the welcome at His entrance into Jerusalem—in their simplicity and understanding applying them better, as they burst into, Hosanna to the Son of David! It rang through the courts and porches of the temple, this children's Hosanna. They heard it, whom the wonders He had spoken and done, had only filled with indignation. Once more in their impotent anger, they sought, as the Pharisees had done, by a hypocritical appeal to His

reverence for God, not only to mislead, and so to use His very love of the truth against the truth, but to betray Him into silencing those children's voices."

No answer comes from the lips of those hypocrites to the Word of God, the Sword, He used once more. The very next act of His is one of deep solemnity. "And leaving them He went forth out of the City to Bethany, and there He passed the night" (verse 17). There they stood in the darkening porches of the temple, the pictures of hate and despair. The night came on rapidly for them. They knew Him and had rejected Him and now He leaves them.

"But early in the morning, as He came back into the City, He hungered. And seeing a fig tree in the way, He came to it and found on it nothing but leaves only. And He says to it, Let there be never more fruit of thee forever. And the fig tree was immediately dried up" (verses 18, 19). Early in the morning the blessed One is up to return to the City. What a story the two words tell us "He hungered." The King was hungry. He who was rich, had indeed become poor. There by the wayside is a fig tree bearing many leaves; there He looked for some of the old fruit, or perhaps some of the unripe figs. He finds nothing and a curse follows, which withers the tree. It is well known that the fig tree is the type of Israel. The cursing of the fig tree stands for the national rejection of the people. Israel yielded no fruit, therefore the barren tree was cut off and cast into the fire, while the root remains (Luke xiii).

"And when the disciples saw it, they wondered, saying, How immediately is the fig tree dried up! And Jesus answering said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith and do not doubt not only shall ye do what is done to the fig tree, but even, if ye should say to this mountain, Be thou taken away and be cast into the sea, it shall come to pass. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (verses 20-22)

They wondered at the power which made the fig tree wither, and He calls their attention that the power of God is ready to answer their faith. The connection is obvious. Israel had no faith in God, hence their bareness. If they have faith, it shall be far different; the power of God is then at their disposal. The mountain is the type of an obstacle. Every obstacle can be and will be removed out of the way in answer to prayer. That there is a reference to Israel in these words is no doubt true. The nation was a mountain and by its disobedience and rejection of the Lord, the nation was an obstacle in the path of the Gospel. But on account of faith this mountain was indeed cast into the sea, the type of the nations. Precious to faith has ever been and ever will be the Word, the author and finisher of the faith speaks here. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Let us not limit them, nor say as some have said, it is not for us. They are for the children of God and there is no limit to them. *All* things—whatsoever; surely there is no limit here; and then the three steps—asking in prayer, believing and receiving. He, the King, who has all power spake these words; and what a meaning they should have for us! May we cast ourselves upon them in childlike faith.

Again we see our Lord in the temple. He is teaching the people. Perhaps it was a great multitude which had gathered. Soon the enemies came also to oppose Him. These men, the rulers of the people, are now gathering force and getting ready for the great final rejection of the King. But ere this comes He silences all their objections and accusations and shows them in their evil and hateful character.

"And when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, saying, By what authority doest Thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" (Verse 23.) What

troubled them most was no doubt the scene of the preceding day, the cleansing of the temple. He is face to face with the mighty ecclesiastical rulers of the people, those who constitute the Sanhedrim. How will He deal with them? How will He answer their question? Divine wisdom is manifested in the way He deals with them. It is so in the chapters which follow, in these conflicts with the men who were so soon to be His accusers, to deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles. "And Jesus answering said to them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I also will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John, whence was it? of heaven? or of men?" (Verses 24, 25.) Here was the question for them to answer. And in this way He not only silenced them but He also answered the question. John the Baptist to whom He appealed had borne witness of Him. John himself, the forerunner of the Christ to whom He so faithfully pointed, was believed to have been a prophet. If they said, Yes, the Baptism of John was of heaven, as they *should* have said, they would have both endorsed John's statement concerning Jesus and this would have condemned them, their unbelief and satanic hatred. They dared not to say that John's Baptism was not of heaven. What could they do? There they stand with their dark faces, talking over this serious matter. "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we should say, Of heaven, He will say to us, Why then have ye not believed him? But if we should say, Of men, we fear the people, for all hold John for a prophet. And answering Jesus they said, We do not know" (verses 25, 26). Miserable, self-condemned, dishonest men they were! Alas! how much of the same spirit and worse is found to-day among the self-appointed ecclesiastical rulers of the people, who reject the Christ of God. The Lord refuses to discuss with them this question. "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do

these things." The question they had asked was answered. He is the King, the Christ, the Son of God and as such He was about His Father's business and that was His authority for cleansing the temple, His Father's house and His own.

And now a parable. "A man had two children, and coming to the first he said, Child, go to-day, work in my vineyard. And He answering said, I will not; but afterwards repenting Himself He went. And coming to the second he said likewise; and he answering said, I go, sir, and went not. Which of the two did the will of the father? They say to Him, the first. Jesus says to them, Verily I say unto you that the tax gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax gatherers and harlots believed Him; but ye when ye saw it repented not yourselves afterwards to believe him" (verses 28-32).

The parable needs but little comment. They despised the tax gatherers and harlots, but the Lord proves that these polished, cultured, educated, religious priests and elders were far worse, far more obnoxious. The tax gatherers and harlots are meant by the son who said he would not go and repented and went. The second who said, I go, and does not go, nor does he repent, is the proud religious Pharisee, the high priests and elders. Thus the righteous Judge lays them bare with His mighty sword. Self-righteous they repented not. Convicted and condemned the Sanhedrim stands in the presence of the King.

The chief priests and elders have no answer to the parable the Lord had spoken, and now after, perhaps, a brief silence He gives them a second parable. This one is a parable which reviews the history of their nation and predicts the soon coming calamity. Again He makes His enemies to bear

witness themselves, and we shall learn later that these men understood of what the King spake.

"Hear another parable. There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and put a hedge round it, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went abroad. But when the time of the fruit came nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did to them likewise. And afterwards he sent to them his son, saying, They will respect my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and lay hold of his inheritance. And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. When, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to these husbandmen?" (Verses 33-40.) When the Lord spoke of the vineyard, with the hedge and the winepress, the tower and the husbandmen, as well as of the fruit the vineyard was to yield, they must have recognized at once that this referred to Israel. He meant by it the nation to whom He had come to offer the Kingdom. Israel, a vineyard, is an Old Testament picture. The King, no doubt, had Isaiah's prophecy in mind, when He uttered this parable. It is founded upon Isaiah, chapter v: 1-7. Jeremiah ii:21; Psalm lxxx:8, and other passages speak of the same fact. The Lord through His Spirit had spoken all these words by the Prophets and now He Himself had come to flash the truth of God's mercy to Israel, their shameful past and the still greater, impending sin before the hearts of these national leaders. The vineyard so well kept and provided for had not yielded fruit. The servants who came to the vineyard are the prophets whom God sent, and they had rejected and maltreated them. At last the Son

came, sent by the Father. This is the full dealing of God with Israel. Prophet after prophet came and spake in Jehovah's name and then God sent forth His Son. What a moment it must have been when the Lord Jesus Christ uttered these words. The Son the Father had sent stood in their midst and they could not but realize that He is the Son. What will they do with the Son? Will they receive His message? Will they bow to His authority? No. He saith that they took the heir, "cast him out of the vineyard and slew him." Awful prediction of the coming events. And He knew all what it meant for Himself to be taken outside and be slain there. The climax of sin is here revealed. But let us not pass by the significant word, "let us kill him and lay hold of his inheritance." Even so by the death of the Son of God we receive, believing on Him, His inheritance.

The question had been asked by the King, "what will the Lord do to those husbandmen?" It is for them to answer and their answer must be their own verdict. Will they dare and give Him an answer? So blinded were they that they did indeed. "They said unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who will render to him the fruits in their season." Well said! And what they had spoken to their own condemnation came upon these wicked husbandmen.

And now the Lord continues quoting from the Book of Psalms: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes" (verse 42). The quotation is from Psalm cxviii. This psalm is much used in the ritual of Judaism. The rejected stone is the Messiah, and in His rejection He becomes the head of the corner. The same truth is witnessed to by the Holy Spirit in Acts iv:11;

Eph. ii:20, and 1 Pet. ii:7. The leaders of the people are the builders. What foreshadowings of events to come!

But the Lord now pronounces His verdict upon them. He had heard the words spoken by His enemies in their self-condemnation; He speaks next and tells them that their judgment was right. "Wherefore I say unto you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (verse 43).

They had refused not alone that kingdom but the King; the Son they would soon cast out and therefore the Kingdom was to be taken from them. These men who stood there, the generation which had share and part in the rejection of the Kingdom and the King, will *never* see the Kingdom. It is a sad blindness when men can teach in these days a restitutionism which includes these scribes, elders and chief priests, that they are to be raised from the dead at the time of the coming of the Lord and receive a share in the Kingdom. The Word of the Lord is emphatic and absolute; there is no hope for them. The nation to whom the Lord promises the Kingdom is not the Church. The Church is called the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the Habitation of God by the Spirit, the Lamb's Wife, but never a nation. The nation is Israel still, but that believing remnant of the nation, living when the Lord comes.

He adds another word in connection with speaking of Himself as the Stone, that Old Testament type of King Messiah. "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (verse 44). This is a very significant utterance. The Lord in these few words predicts the coming judgment of the Jews and the Gentiles. The one sentence has been carried out and the other is still to be executed. The Jews have fallen on this stone and they have been broken. How it has become true! The stone is yet to fall and strike the

world-powers, the Gentiles, and grind them to powder. Our space does not permit to follow this thought, but we advise our readers to turn in their Bibles to Daniel ii and read Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the divinely given interpretation. The stone cut out without hands, falling out of heaven, smiting the great image at its feet, is the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Coming. The Lord refers to this here. As truly as He broke the Jews who fell on Him, so will He pulverize Gentile world power and dominion, when He is revealed from heaven. The nations are ripe for their judgment.

"And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him for a prophet."

Thus ends this remarkable chapter. They knew Him; they knew what He meant. They wanted to take Him then, so great was their hatred, yet they were cowards fearing men, *not* God. The people held Him for a prophet only and not for the Messiah.

CHAPTER XXII.

A third parable follows immediately. They would have laid their hands upon Him, after that searching second parable had been uttered by the Lord, but His hour was not yet. Once more He flashes forth His truth and reveals events to come.

"And Jesus answering spoke to them again in parables, and said, The Kingdom of the heavens has become like a king, who made a wedding feast for his son, and sent his bondmen to call the persons invited to the wedding feast, and they would not come. Again he sent other bondmen, saying, Say to the persons invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatted beasts are killed, and all things are ready; come to the wedding feast. But they made light of it, and went, one to his own land, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laying hold of his bondmen, ill-treated and slew them. And when the King heard of it he was wroth, and having sent his forces, destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he says to his bondmen, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy; go therefore into the thoroughfares of the highways, and as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast. And those bondmen went out into the highways and brought together all as many as they found, both evil and good; and the wedding feast was furnished with guests. And the King having gone in to see the guests, beheld there a man not clothed with a wedding garment. And he says to him, Friend, how camest thou in here not having a wedding garment? But he was speechless. Then said the King

to the servants, Bind him feet and hands and take him away, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called ones, but few chosen ones" (verses 1-14).

The dispensational character of this parable is very marked. It is ushered in with the familiar words found alone in this Gospel. "The Kingdom of the heavens is like," or as it ought to be, "has become like." No doubt it is the same parable as in Luke, chapter xiv:16-24; only here the Holy Spirit makes prominent the dispensational features, which are not mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, because they do not belong there. The marriage feast which the King makes for his son and to which he invites guests typifies the gracious offer of God to *give* joy, comfort and blessings to those whom he wishes to partake of it. It is *for the Son,* in honor of the Son, that the feast is made. Of the Bride, who of course belongs also to the marriage feast, nothing is said. This parable foreshadows a great deal more than the other two parables in the previous chapter. It goes beyond the cross, for the offer is made not only to Israel but also to the Gentiles. The Kingdom was offered to the nation; had the Jews repented, there would have been a marriage feast for them, a feast of fat things, as promised by the prophets. God's mercy would have been manifested upon them. The invitation contained in the third verse was given in the preaching of the Kingdom before the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Between the third and fourth verses these great events, as well as the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be placed. The preaching of the Kingdom with its gracious blessings stopped, as we learned in the study of this Gospel, with the twelfth chapter. In the thirteenth chapter the Lord teaches the mysteries of the Kingdom, that which takes place during this present dispensation. Now, in the fourth verse we read of a second

invitation. When was this second invitation given to the invited guests, that is to Israel? Not before the Cross, but immediately after, with the Holy Spirit come down from Heaven. These servants were to tell them which *were* bidden, that all things *are ready*. The work of redemption accomplished, God in His infinite mercy gives another call and now He can say that indeed all *is* ready, even for the people who had rejected the Son of His love and had crucified Him. The opening chapters of the Book of Acts give us the history of this invitation. There we find the record of the second call to Israel.

The preaching of the Kingdom is resumed for a brief period and with this preaching is the promise of forgiveness of sins and the times of refreshing and restitution. The invitation, which went forth after the Lord had taken His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is clearly stated by Peter in the third chapter of Acts. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began" (Acts iii:19-21).

No Gentile heard this message, nor was it meant for a Gentile; it was exclusively addressed to Jerusalem. It is a mistake to teach otherwise. The times of restoration or restitution of all things, refer us to that which is promised to Israel when converted, with the Kingdom restored. To use this passage, as it is done so often, as an argument for that wicked doctrine, the restitution of all things, including the unsaved, is fundamentally wrong. Most of the soul-destroying errors taught in these last days spring from a wrong division of the Word of Truth. If this new invita-

tion had been accepted by the Jews, then the Lord would have returned and the restoration of all things, spoken by the prophets and promised to His earthly people, would have come to pass. But the call was not heeded; the restoration of all things, promised to Israel, has been postponed.

Of this refusal to accept this gracious invitation to come to the marriage feast we read in this parable in the fifth and sixth verses. They made light of it, they ignored the offer and occupied themselves with earthly things, such as merchandise. They did the same, what Judah had done after he had with his brethren sold Joseph, he turned a merchant (Gen. xxxviii). But simple rejection of the gracious offer is not all, "the rest (the leaders of the people) laying hold of his bondmen, ill-treated and slew them." The Book of Acts show how literally these words of the Lord were fulfilled. The climax was the stoning of Stephen.

And after this rejected second offer to the bidden guests, the Jews, comes the punishment sent upon them by God. Their city is destroyed, burned by fire, and these evil men, who are now called murderers, suffer the judgment as well. The Roman army came against Jerusalem, the city is burned; that awful judgment the Lord had predicted when He beheld the city, fell upon Jerusalem and the nation was dispersed. Again we say, what a literal fulfilment! This ends God's dealing with Israel as a *nation* for the present age. He will deal with them again ere long; but nationally they are set aside during this age, which, however, does not mean that the individual Jew could not hear and accept the offer of Grace.

Now follows something new. It corresponds to that of which we read in the parable of the sower in Matthew xiii, "the sower went out to sow." It is now outside of Israel nationally that the Grace of God is offered and the invitation to the wedding feast is given. The servants go out

into the highways and give the invitation and bring together all as many as they found, both evil and good, so that the wedding feast was furnished.

It is clear that this going forth of the servants stands for the Gospel call going out to the Gentiles. "By their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles" as the Holy Spirit later testifies through Paul, is taught by the Lord Himself in this parable.

Something follows, which is often misapplied. All the confusion about the wedding garment springs from the wrong conception of the parable, in giving it a church application and putting the scene into Heaven. However, the church is here not at all in view. It is, as in Matthew xiii, the Kingdom of the heavens, the professing sphere of Christendom. The Lord shows that this sphere where His Name is professed and His gracious Gospel invitation is heard, is in a mixed condition. It is composed of professors and possessors. The call goes forth, many hear and follow the call, but not all believe with the heart unto salvation. The man without the wedding garment is the representative of this class and a large class it is. This is evident from the words with which our Lord closes the parable, "For *many* are called, but few chosen." The many which are called are all those who heard the call and made an outward profession, without having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. The wedding garment is the same as the "best robe" which by the Father was put upon the prodigal. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the wedding garment and all who are mere professors of Christ, without having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, will share the fate of this man in the parable. They will be cast into the outer darkness. Awful fate for every one who has not Christ to cover him in the presence of a holy and righteous God. However man may cover himself, however moral and cultured he may be, or

religious and philanthropic, if he has not put on Christ he is naked and his place will be where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth forever. We only wish to add that the scene of viewing the guests must not be put in heaven. None but those who are Christ's, saved and in possession of eternal life, will be in heaven, and none of those can nor ever will be cast out. It refers to the same time as Matthew xiii:40-43. Nor does the Lord teach the last things here, how judgment is to take place, where and in what order. In a general way He teaches this as a warning that though His invitation goes forth and many hear, yet not all will be chosen and that simply because they refuse to accept the gift of God—the wedding garment, which alone fits us to be in the presence of the King.

The wonderful parable had been uttered; the fearful doom of Jerusalem and its evil leaders predicted; once more the Pharisees are silent in the presence of the King. Their hearts and moral condition had been uncovered, but determined to refuse the light which shone upon them, their darkness became greater than before. We see them withdrawing from His presence. They had nothing to say to Him; no answer to give; no confession to make. Led by their evil hearts, under the control of Satan they turned their backs upon the Lord. Light refused becomes darkness. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." This is a solemn word, especially in our day. Light received, truth revealed and not acted upon and followed, results in darkness in our days.

We see now the Pharisees in desperate council against the Lord. "Then went the Pharisees and held council how they might ensnare Him in speaking" (verse 15). This was their only weapon now. They tried to find a way to ensnare Him, and having defeated Him, they intended to publish their victory abroad and find cause to accuse Him and

reject Him. The second half of this chapter is occupied with the record of these attempts. The three great factions, Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees combine in this. Ritualists, Worldlings and Rationalists make common cause to defeat the Lord. Though so essentially different, they unite in this one thing, the rejection of the Lord. It is not better in our day. First came the Pharisees and sent their disciples with the Herodians to Him. After He had answered their very subtle question the Sadducees appeared; they also have to return completely silenced. Then comes a great lawyer of the Pharisees and he tempts and once more the Lord wins the victory. Three times the Devil tempted the Lord and three times the Lord is tempted by the leaders of the people. No doubt the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees were but the instruments of that evil being. Then the Lord turns questioner. He only needs to put one question. They cannot answer Him. Not a word could they say nor did any one dare from that day to ask Him another question. After this the King takes the place of the Judge and pronounces judgment upon the corrupt ecclesiastical leaders.

But let us look briefly at the account of the temptings.

"And they sent out to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one, for Thou regardest not men's persons; tell us therefore what Thou thinkest: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, Why tempt ye me, hypocrites? Show me the money of the tribute. And they presented unto Him a denarius. And He says to them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say to Him, Cæsar's. Then He says to them: Pay then what is Cæsar's to Cæsar and what is God's to God. And when they heard Him they wondered and left Him and went away" (verses 16-22).

With what cunning and flattery they had approached Him. For once they spoke the truth when they had declared, "Thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth." But He knew them, He read their thoughts and sinister purpose.

The temptation was a very subtle one. The Pharisees had no doubt planned it all amongst themselves and had brought the Herodians along as witnesses to take down His answer. The Herodians were mean, low Jews, who favored the political rule and Roman authority and that, no doubt, for selfish reasons. Had the Lord answered the question in the negative and had He forbidden to give tribute to Cæsar, these Herodians with the Pharisees (whom the Herodians must have hated) would certainly have accused the Lord as being a conspirator against the Roman government. Had the Lord answered the question in the affirmative and demanded that Cæsar should receive tribute, the Pharisees would have claimed that He could not be the Messiah of Israel, inasmuch as He taught subjection under a Gentile King. "There was a strong party in the land, with which, not only politically but religiously, many of the noblest spirits would sympathize, which maintained, that to pay the tribute money to Cæsar was virtually to own his royal authority, and so to disown that of Jehovah, who alone was Israel's King. They argued that all the miseries of the land and the people were due to this national unfaithfulness."*

To the Pharisees it must have seemed as if for the Lord there could be no escape. Their astonishment when He answered the question, in His heavenly wisdom, shows that they had not anticipated any defeat at all.

They had to show Him the tribute money and on it appeared the image and superscription of Cæsar. They had

*Edersheim.

to make the declaration whose image it was. And in His answer He tells them plainly that not only should that be given to Cæsar which is Cæsar's, but unto God that which is God's. How was it that the people had to give at all tribute to Cæsar? Did God mean that His people should be under Gentile rule and power? What had put them there? If they had given to God that which is God's they would never have had to pay tribute to Cæsar. Now that they had put themselves by their sin and apostasy in that condition they were to render that to Cæsar which belongs to him and to God what is His. This surely was a divine answer such as only the Lord Himself could give. They could give no answer. They wondered and went away.

The Sadducees appear next upon the scene. These deniers of the resurrection come with a temptation of their own. "On the same day there came unto Him Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, and they asked Him saying, Teacher, Moses said, if a man die, not having children, that his brother should marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers, and the first having married died, and not having seed left his wife to his brother. In like manner also the second and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection therefore of which of the seven shall she be wife, for all had her?"

This attempt is as blunt as the other was subtle. The Sadducees denied both the resurrection and the existence of angels; it was not at all believed by them what they had asked. There was also a sneer at the Pharisees in their words. The question is based on the divine law as given through Moses in the book of Deuteronomy (chapter xxv:5, etc.). However, the law in this respect was far from being practiced in those days, and the interpreters of this law had put all kinds of limitations upon it. There may, of course,

be a case possible like the one recited by the Sadducees, but it is unlikely that it was a real case they laid before Him; it was no doubt gotten up for the occasion. Ignorance, unbelief and sarcasm prompted this question. And what did He answer? He lays bare both their ignorance of the Scripture and the power of God. "And Jesus answering said to them, Ye err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (verse 29). They did not believe in the Scriptures as the God breathed Word; they were the "Higher Critics" of their day. But the Lord does not try to prove to them the validity of the Scriptures, but tells them that they are ignorant. Then He continues, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven." In a few words the Lord affirms the truth of resurrection, the existence of angels, which they denied, and shows that their carnal imaginations were but the result of their carnal hearts. The body of humiliation will not be continued in resurrection and earthly relations such as marrying and giving in marriage will cease there. The Lord of course does not teach about resurrection itself in this passage. His purpose is to answer the Sadducees with their foolish question. What He had stated about the state of resurrection was generally believed by the Jews living at that time. The rabbis declared, as learned from talmudical literature, "that in the world to come there would be neither eating nor drinking, fruitfulness nor increase, business nor envy, hatred nor strife, but that the righteous would sit with crowns on their heads and feast on the splendor of the Shekinah."

He has still an additional word to say about resurrection, which is convincing proof that there will be a resurrection. "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

God is not God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard it they were astonished at His doctrine" (verses 30-32). God calls Himself by the name of these three men (Exodus iii), and as He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, therefore a resurrection must take place. There was nothing left for the Sadducees then but to withdraw.

Once more the Pharisees appear. "But the Pharisees, having heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, were gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, demanded, tempting Him, and saying, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law, And He said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law and the prophets hang" (verses 34-40). There were various disputations among the Jewish scribes, the lawyers, about the greatest commandment, but the Lord does not enter into these at all. Once more His answer manifests perfect wisdom and according to the record given in the Gospel of Mark the lawyer was greatly moved by this answer. The Lord told him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii:34). However, the questioner did not realize that He who stood before him in that hour was Jehovah Himself, the giver of the law.

After this the hopelessness of their case is apparent. They gathered together in a group, but none can suggest a new question, another temptation. All their attempts had proven futile. The Lord now approaches them. He has a question for them. The question of the Messiah, His personality, was never touched upon by the Pharisees and it was after all the most important. The Lord has a question for them about Himself, and, unlike the Pharisees, he uses the Scrip-

ture, quoting from His own Word. "And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus demanded of them, saying, What think ye concerning the Christ? Whose Son is He? They say to Him, David's. He says to them, How, then, does David in Spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand until I put thine enemies under thy feet? If, therefore, David call Him Lord, How is He His son? And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did any one dare from that day to question Him any more" (verses 41-46).

It is from the cx Psalm the Lord draws His question. This Psalm is one of the great messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. It is very prominent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is quoted a number of times as being fulfilled in Him, who is now the man of glory, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. This will be done when He comes again. In sending Him, the First begotten, into the world, God will put down all his enemies. It is almost impossible to believe that, with the evidences from Scripture, such as the word of our Lord and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews, certain men who call themselves "scholars" and assume the place of "critics" can deny the cx Psalm was composed by David and that the Psalm has any messianic reference at all. This surely is wicked unbelief, as pronounced, perhaps more so, than the unbelief of the Pharisees.

Well, the Pharisees here answer that Messiah is to be the Son of David. They were professed teachers of Israel and still they did not understand the Scriptures. The question the Lord now puts to them, David calling Him who is to be a son of his, Lord, that is Jehovah, they could not, perhaps would not, answer. The passage teaches clearly who Messiah is. He is Jehovah incarnate, the Son of David and

David's Lord. And the interrogator is He. His Davidic descent could not be denied; that He has a legal title to the throne of David is clearly proven by the genealogy. In His ministry throughout these years, He had manifested Himself in His mighty works as Jehovah. They could give Him no answer. Solemn moment it was. No answer! No repentance! They are silenced, and when they open their lips again it is to cry "Crucify Him!" The end is now coming on rapidly. In the next chapter He speaks as Judge pronouncing His judgment upon the leaders of the nation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

For the last time we have seen the Pharisees in the presence of the Lord in the previous chapter. What an important part these ecclesiastical leaders of the professing people of God play in this Gospel. They rejected Him; hated Him without a cause, and after they found they could not ensnare Him they resorted to that which Satan had put into their wicked hearts "that they might kill Him." That which the Lord had foretold in His parable of the vineyard is now soon to take place. They made their plans and are ready to take their King and deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles to be crucified. He is now soon to be taken, delivered into man's hand, going to the cross, where He, who knew no sin, was to be made sin for us. How solemn His words when He stood before Pilate and declared, "Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above. On this account he that has delivered me up to thee has greater sin." But before we reach the story of the passion of the King, so wonderfully told in this Gospel, we find the King first of all passing judgment upon these evil leaders of the people. In the next place we have recorded, as nowhere else in the Gospel records, the great Olivet discourse, in which the King reveals the future. Here we find prophecy concerning the Jews and Jerusalem, the church and the Gentiles.

The chapter which is before us contains the "Woes" of the King upon the Pharisees. It is one of the most solemn ones in Matthew. Pharisaism is still in the earth; Ritualism, Traditionalism and with it the rejection of the authority

of the Lord and His written Word, is Pharisaism, that evil leaven against which the Lord warns. This Christian Pharisaism is far worse than the old Jewish system. And where in Christendom is a little of that leaven lacking? Only the Grace of God, an unbroken fellowship with the Father and His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, can keep the individual believer from manifesting a Pharisaical spirit.

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitude and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees have set themselves down in Moses' seat; all things therefore, whatever they may tell you, do not keep. But do not after their works, for they say and do not, but bind burdens heavy and hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of men, but will not move them with their finger. And all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief place in feasts, and the first seats in the synagogue, and salutations in the market places, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But ye, be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your instructor, and all ye are brethren. And call not any one your father upon earth; for one is your Father, He who is in the heavens. Neither be called leaders, for one is your leader, the Christ. But the greatest of you shall be your servant. And whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted" (verses 1-12). These are indeed cutting words. Out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword. Well may these words be placed in connection with the church message to Pergamos, in which the glorified Christ saith, "These things says He that has the sharp two-edged sword." Pergamos shows prophetically that period of the church when Ritualism, Nicolaitanism (Clericalism) came in like a flood and a certain class of men assumed the place of authority in the church, as leaders, priests, and began to dictate and teach

the traditions of men. And ever since that time and through that into which Pergamos developed, Thyatira (Roman-Catholicism), the leaven of the Pharisees, has worked on in Christendom and is still working. The Lord speaks first of all of the place which the scribes and Pharisees had chosen. They had placed themselves in Moses' seat. This no doubt He spoke in reference to legislation and not in regard to doctrine.

They had occupied the legislative seat, and when their sect started it was with a zeal for the law, which God had given through Moses. Soon, however, they became corrupt. In that part of the *Talmud* which is called the *Mishnah** it is stated that they were to be regarded as if put into that place by Moses himself, taking their places in his seat, and were to be obeyed, so far as outward observations were concerned.

As far as the God given law was concerned and its observances, they were to do and to keep what the Pharisees said. What a wise exhortation this is! He, the King, fully recognized the position they had taken; if He had spoken otherwise, they might have accused Him of inciting the multitudes to riot against their authority. Romans xiii:1-7 contains a similar wise exhortation by the Spirit of God for this present age. Against which the Lord warns is their works. There were two great schools among these Pharisees as we stated before; the school of Hillel and the school of Shammai. These were occupied with interpretations of the law. What strange interpretations were given, what tedious burdens were bound upon the people, which God never meant, could

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*The Talmud is composed of two parts, the *Gemara* and the *Mishna*. Mishna means "repetition," and was a repetition of the written law.

easily be illustrated and demonstrated by quotations from that tremendous literary work, the Talmud. "The burdens became intolerable. The blame rested equally on both the great rabbinic schools. For although the school of Hillel was supposed in general to make the yoke lighter, and that of Shammai heavier, yet not only did they agree on many points, but the school of Hillel was not unfrequently even more strict than that of his rival. In truth their differences seem too often only prompted by a spirit of opposition, so that the serious business of religion became in their hands one of rival authority and mere wrangling" (Edersheim). But while they put these burdens upon the people and domineered over them they neither kept them nor did they move a finger to remove them. In connection with this external show of religion, for which the Pharisees stood, the Phylacteries are mentioned. The general Christian reader has little information about the meaning of this word. The word "phylacteries" means "observatories" to keep the remembrance of the Law alive. In different parts of the Pentateuch we read these words, "And thou shalt bind these words for a sign on thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates" (Exod. xiii:9-16; Deut. vi:9, etc.). The last named injunction, "Write them upon the posts of thy house," is literally practised by orthodox Jews, by writing these words upon a piece of parchment, inclosing them in a tin box, and this box is nailed on the door posts. From the same words the phylacteries, or *tephillin,* were instituted. These are two strips of leather to each of which is attached a small box; in these boxes there are likewise pieces of parchment upon which the Hebrew text of Deut. vi:4-8 is written. The one leather strip with this box is wound around the forehead, the box resting in the middle of the forehead, while the second strip

is wound around the arm, the left arm, which is nearest to the heart. The ends of this one is made to form the Hebrew letter *"shin,"* which stands for *Shaddai,* the Almighty. Strange and curious laws are connected with the preparation of the phylacteries, the wearing of them; the rabbinical writings contain much on the phylacteries which is superstitious. Thus the talmudical tract *Berachoth* declares, "It is necessary to wear the phylacteries nights in the home as they drive away the demons." Orthodox Jews use them as their fathers did, and there is no doubt that the wearing of phylacteries in the twentieth century by strictly orthodox Jews and their belief in them is the same as in the days when our Lord spake these words. It is seen that the phylacteries sprung from a literal interpretation of the above passages in the Pentateuch, an outward religious observance for which there was no foundation whatever in the law. The Lord, however, does not attack this, we believe, ancient custom, but He attacks the habits of the Pharisees to wear the phylacteries and the enlarged borders of their garments (Num. xv:38), so as to be seen of men. They did it all for show; selfishness controlled them and they had no heart for the things of God. They loved the first places, the honor and praise of men; flatterers, they enjoyed and loved to receive honoring salutations from the side of men in market places. "Rabbi, Rabbi," which means teacher or instructor, they loved to be addressed as well as "Abba," which is "father." All these titles simply sprang from their self-seeking. The Lord now gives teaching, telling his hearers that which concerns of course disciples alone, that they are brethren and that they have but one teacher, the Christ Himself; that they should not call man father, but one is their Father, God Himself. The greatest of His own is the One, who is a servant of all. This reaches over into the new dispensation. The instructor, the guide, is the Lord and the

Holy Spirit. Alas! how the enemy has succeeded in producing and fostering this distinctive mark of Pharisaism in Christendom, with its man-made institutions, titles, honors, offices and leaderships. It was not so in the beginning, but corruption has entered in and we find at the end of the age a Pharisaism far worse than that which the Lord here condemns. And there is a judgment coming upon that boasting, proud, Pharisaical, ritualistic Christendom. The judgment broke over the heads of the Pharisees, their religious system, and so will it break over Christendom. Then those who exalted themselves will be humbled and those who humbled themselves will be exalted. What an encouragement for every true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ to follow strictly these words of our Lord, to go on under Him as Lord and under the guidance of His Spirit, to have no name among men, but to be known of God. In this there is rest and joy and the power of God rests upon the testimony of such who serve in this spirit.

And there is a deeper meaning still to verses 8-10. We quote from one who has expressed it in simple as well as beautiful language. "It is a declaration of the essential relations of man to God. Three things constitute a Christian: What He is, what he believes, what he does; doctrine, experience, practice. Man needs for his spiritual being three things: Life, instruction, guidance; just what our Lord declares in the ten words of the Gospel, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life.' The Roman Catholic 'church' . . . has caught these three things with its usual insight and avows its ability to supply them. The office of the Roman Catholic 'church' is claimed to be threefold: the priestly office imparting and sustaining life by means of the sacraments; the teaching office endowed with infallibility; the guiding office by spiritual confessors. These three things are just what our Lord forbids in the passage under con-

sideration. Acknowledge no man as Father; for no man can impart or sustain spiritual life; install no man as an infallible teacher; allow no one to assume the office of spiritual director; your relation to God and to Christ is as close as that of any other person."*

And now the Lord takes up His "Woes." It is a fearful uncovering of the hearts of the Pharisees and their corruption. And thus He lays bare the hidden things. He will do so again. There are eight woes given in this chapter, though it seems the fourteenth verse does not belong to this chapter. It is, however, found in both the Gospels of Mark and Luke, so that it is evident the Lord also uttered these words. In different respects there is a correspondency between the first discourse of our Lord in this Gospel, the sermon on the mountain and the last one addressed to the multitudes and to His disciples. The Olivet discourse is addressed exclusively to the disciples, who have asked Him. The Sermon on the Mount, as generally the great discourse in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of this Gospel is called, was addressed to the multitudes and the disciples. What this great discourse stands for, the proclamation of the King, we learned in our exposition. He sat there as the great One greater than Moses, expounding and expanding the Law. Here He is upon the seat of judgment; the King is the Judge. In the sermon on the Mount He utters His Blessings, Beatitudes, but here as judge He pronounces His Woes.

We shall not follow these woes in a detailed exposition, but mention the leading thoughts in them.

"But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of the heavens before men; for ye do not enter, nor do ye suffer those that are entering to go in" (verse 13). The Kingdom has been preached unto

*Weston: The Genesis of the New Testament.

them, but they shut willfully their eyes and turned away from the light, which had burst upon them. They did not enter in and kept others away from it. And this is an awful "woe" which falls likewise upon the modern Pharisees, though in a different sense. How many of the man-made "priests" and "teachers," following the traditions of men, usurping the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, are themselves unsaved and keep others from knowing the truth.

Omitting that which is given as the next verse, we read the second Woe. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass the sea and the dry land to make one proselyte, and when he is become such, ye make him twofold more the son of hell than yourselves" (verse 15). Coming from such lips, what a condemnation they contain! They were sectarians, and sectarianism is the fruit of the flesh, as clearly taught in the Epistles. They did everything to make proselytes, and that too for selfish motives. Proselytism was condemned by the rabbinical schools. One of the talmudical sayings is, "Proselytes are as a scab to Israel." It was for selfish reasons they made proselytes to their sect. Is it any different in the proselyting Christendom, down to the smallest party? And after they had attracted some to themselves they made them worse than they were. An awful indictment indeed.

Woe unto you, blind guides, who say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple he is a debtor. Fools and blind, for which is greater, the gold, or the temple which sanctifieth the gold? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it is a debtor. Fools and blind ones, for which is greater, the gift, or the altar which sanctifieth the gift? He therefore that sweareth by the altar swears by it and by all things that are upon it. And he that sweareth by the

temple swears by it and by Him that dwells in it" (verses 16-22.) Without following this woe in every word, it is evident that these leaders loved the gold of the temple more than the temple and the gift which was upon the altar more than the altar. Fools and blind guides they were.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and ye have left aside the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith; these ye ought to have done and not have left those aside. Blind guides who strain out the gnat, but drink down the camel" (verses 23-24).

Their self-righteousness and piety consisted in being very scrupulous about minor things, while the important matters were completely ignored by them. They strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. It is not different to-day. The little unessential things in religious practices are unduly magnified, while the important matters are ignored. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within they are full of rapine and intemperance. Blind Pharisees, make clean first the inside of the cup and of the dish, that their outside also may become clean. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like whited sepulchres which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Thus also ye, outwardly ye appear righteous to men, but within are full of hypocrisies and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets and adorn the tombs of the just, and ye say, If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. So that you bear witness of yourselves that ye are sons of those who slew the prophets; and ye, fill up the measure of your fathers. Serpents, offspring of vipers, how should ye escape the judgment of hell?" (verses 25-33).

These are the concluding woes. They need not much comment. Pharisiaism keeps the outside clean, while inside there is corruption and death. There is a self-righteous, religious boasting of being more advanced than the fathers and more tolerant than they were. But the omniscient One reads their hearts and declares that they fill up the measure of the fathers. They were unsaved men, not the offspring of God, but of vipers; their father, the devil; and they were facing judgment of Gehenna.

Other words were uttered by the King. These are found in the three verses which follow. He would send them prophets and wise men and scribes, and they were to kill them, crucify them, persecute them, and all the righteous blood shed upon the earth should come upon them. This was to come upon that generation. What they hear from His lips another witness filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen, tells them; with the stoning of Stephen the measure was filled up and judgment came.

And now the sublime, mournful ending. The last word of the King to Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent to her, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be He that comes in the name of the Lord."

What a loving, sublime lamentation this is! The King is a King of Love and His heart yearns over His city Jerusalem. How He did long for them! The illustration He uses is one they fully understood, not alone by its simplicity, a hen gathering her chickens, but also because their elders had mentioned this very fact. The Rabbis spoke of Messiah under the name of the *Shekinah* and declared that Israel would be gathered under the wings of the Shekinah, where

they would find rest and blessing. And now the Shekinah was with them. The promised One has come and they would not have Him. They turned away from Jehovah, their King. Their house—no longer "the Father's house"—is to be left desolate. They would see Him in no wise henceforth. That this has a national significance, the rejection of them is evident. And no sooner were the words spoken than He left the temple and went away.

But the discourse which has nothing but Woes ends with a "Blessed," and here comes in the bright ray of hope for Israel. "Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be He that comes in the name of the Lord." This is the promise of His second Coming, and when He comes He will find a believing remnant of that very people, welcoming Him with the messianic greeting of the cxviii Psalm. Then the Shekinah-Glory will spread over Jerusalem and Israel's land, and He that scattered Israel will gather them from the four corners of the earth. It is a strange and evil doctrine which maintains that inasmuch as the woes were spoken upon these Pharisees, that they are also to see Him again. It is claimed that these wicked Pharisees, the offspring of vipers, who could not escape the judgment of hell, are all to be raised from the dead when Christ comes again and have "a second chance" to see Him, and that then they will receive Him. Such Jewish universalism has no Scripture foundation whatever. It is a remnant which will behold the King coming out of the opened heavens in the day of His manifestation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In the two chapters, which follow, we have the great Olivet discourse of our Lord.

Next to the thirteenth of Matthew, the seven parables, these two chapters are the most misunderstood. We shall have occasion to point out the erroneous interpretations which spring mostly from a false conception of the characterisitics of the age in which we live.

First of all we shall look at the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters in a general way. We mention them together for they should never be separated. The Olivet discourse, was spoken in answer to the questions the disciples had asked of the Lord Jesus. In Mark and Luke the Spirit of God has recorded parts of this discourse, but only in the first Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew, do we find a full report. This is in fullest harmony with the scope of the Gospel.

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." Thus God had spoken to Moses (Deut. xviii:18). We know from the Book of Acts that this was a prophecy to be fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts iii:22 and vii:37). But the Lord is greater than Moses (Hebrews iii:5-6). In the first great discourse in this Gospel, the sermon on the mount, He expounded the law and spoke with greater authority than Moses ever could speak; "I say unto you." He fulfilled the law. But Moses was also a prophet. Before he left his people, he uttered a great prophecy. This is found in Deuteronomy xxxii. It is in the form of a song,

a wonderful inspired unfolding of the history of Israel. God's dealings with them in the past is reviewed and then follows a forecast of their future to the very end, which up to the present time has not yet been reached. This is followed by the Blessing of Moses, likewise a prophecy.

And now He, who is greater than Moses, the prophet like unto Moses utters a great prophecy, more complete and far-reaching than that of Moses. He, Jehovah, had come in the midst of His people. As king He had offered the promised kingdom; He and the offer of the kingdom had been rejected by His own, and now before He goes to the cross to fulfil all that was written concerning His sufferings in the law and the prophets, He predicts events connected with the end of the age and His future glorious manifestation, which will usher in that new age of blessing and glory, of which His own Spirit testified in all the prophets.

The Olivet discourse is a great prophecy, the King's last, great utterance. It was spoken, as we shall see later, in answer to the question of the disciples. He had just predicted the destruction of the magnificent temple buildings, and while He sat upon the Mount of Olives, where in the future His glorious feet shall stand in the hour of His manifestation, they asked Him: "Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the Age?" We shall find later that here in Matthew, the Spirit of God in giving us the discourse does not give us the words which relate to the destruction of the temple, which was then standing. He omits here certain words, which, however, are given in the Gospel of Luke. All this and much else our exposition will bring out.

The discourse itself is divided into three great parts clearly marked. The answer of the Lord to the question asked begins with the fourth verse. Up to the forty-fourth verse we have the first part of His predictions. Beginning with the forty-fifth verse, He changes His mode of speaking. No longer direct predictions, but He speaks again in parables. These are three: 1. The parable of the faithful and evil servant. 2. The parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. 3. The parable of the man traveling into a far country and delivering unto his servants his goods. In one of these parables we find again the phrase so peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew "the kingdom of the heavens." These parables end with the thirtieth verse. In the verses which follow the Lord no longer speaks in parables. It is true Matthew xxv:31 to 46 is often called a parable, but it is not. It is a revelation the King gives concerning His own glorious appearing and the judgment He will execute in that day. We have therefore a three-fold division of the Olivet discourse.

First division: Chapter xxiv:4-44. Second division: Chapter xxiv:45 to chapter xxv:30. Third division: Chapter xxv:31-46.

We shall look at these divisions first of all to find out to what season or time they refer and after we have cleared away some of the false interpretations and misconceptions, we hope to study each division in detail.

In reading over the first part of the discourse of our Lord we find that it relates to disciples, which of necessity must be Jewish. In this part the Lord speaks of the ending of the age, the time of distress which is to come, the great tribulation and a climax is reached in this division, when the Lord speaks of His coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This is

to take place immediately after the days of that tribulation.

The most widespread interpretation of this part of the discourse is that it all was fulfilled in the past. The great tribulation is a thing of the past and the Lord Jesus Christ came again in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is the foolish, spiritualizing method, which does such violence to the Word of God. These interpreters are given to the wildest and most fanciful imaginations to prove their assertions. Quite often they make use of the writings of Josephus instead of God's Word. According to them the year 70 was the year in which "the Son of Man came in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory." In a recent volume published in defense of this theory, which is unknown in primitive Christianity, the writer tries to get over the difficulties by saying the following: "But who can say what other sights appeared at the final moment of the catastrophe? (The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.) The 'Coming' was like a lightning flash, not abiding for days like the glory on Sinai. The sight of the Glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mountains to the eyes of the sons of Israel; and that glory was a real presence, a veritable parousia, for Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai. And yet in that Sinaitic parousia the Israelites saw no form or shape of the divine person. Whether those who saw the sign of the Son of Man which appeared in heaven immediately after the tribulation of those days saw the person and form of the Son of Man Himself, or only some symbol of His presence, must remain a mystery." This interpretation, which looks upon verses 4-44 fulfilled in the past at the time when Titus besieged Jerusalem, has its origin in a deplorable ignorance of God's dispensational dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles. It

leaves nothing for the Jewish nation in the future. It would take us too long to show the impossibility that the Lord meant by these predictions the events which transpired between the time of His resurrection and the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. But had the Lord nothing to say in this discourse about the great judgment, which befell Jerusalem. He certainly gave a revelation concerning it as well as warnings. But the record of this prediction of the fall of Jerusalem under Titus is not at all given in Matthew twenty-four, but we find that the Spirit of God has put that in the Gospel of Luke. In Luke xxi:20-23 we have the words which predict the siege and fall of Jerusalem in the year 70. The prediction is, that after that catastrophe has taken place and they have fallen by the edge of the sword and are led away captives, that Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This happened after the destruction of the City and Jerusalem is still trodden down, because the times of the Gentiles have not yet run out. But now turning to the words in Matthew we find an entirely different result from the manifestation of the Son of Man in Glory and in the clouds of heaven (that which postmillennialism claims to be identical with the destruction of Jerusalem). There is not a word mentioned of their being scattered among the nations, but the very opposite is said "they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other." The predictions in Matthew xxiv:4-44 have nothing whatever to do with the 40 years which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, nor with that event in the year 70. That they refer to Judea and Jerusalem, that the predictions concern Jewish disciples and that they describe scenes of distress and tribulation to be enacted in the land of Israel is quite true.

Another mode of explaining these first predictions of the Olivet discourse is, to apply them to this Christian age in which we live. This is generally done by those who have the correct Scriptural belief in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They reject the spiritualizing teaching of postmillennialism and hold that there will be a future great tribulation, which will close with the visible and glorious manifestation of the Son of Man out of heaven. They tell us that the Lord describes this entire Christian age and especially the closing of it, the end. Then they maintain that the church is to remain on the earth in this end of the age and to pass through the great tribulation, and therefore the exhortations contained in this chapter are meant for Christian believers living in the end of the age. This wrong interpretation has confused not a few of God's people. Let one get clear on two important teachings of the word and deliverance from this false interpretation of this part of our Lord's discourse will speedily follow. We mean the teaching of the Scriptures of what the church is, her calling and her destiny. And in the second place the teaching of the prophetic word, that the Lord will call a believing Jewish remnant, which will suffer and witness at the end of the age. If a person, be he a teacher or not, is ignorant of either one of these, he must be confused in his conception of the first part of Matthew xxiv.

Furthermore it is to be said that the disciples knew absolutely nothing of a Christian age. Such an age could not even begin, when they asked the question about the end of the age. They did not mean a Christian age, but their Jewish age. All through these forty verses everything is of Jewish character. The warning is against false Christs and false prophets; the warning given to church is against false spirits. The condition of salvation

that one must endure to the end is nowhere given to the Christian believer, who is saved and safe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It has an entirely different meaning here. Again the prayer that the flight should not take place on the Sabbath day is Jewish, for the Christian believer has no Sabbath day, but the Lord's day. The reference to Daniel and the great tribulation, which never concerns the church, but Israel, shows us that we are not on Christian, but Jewish ground. The preaching which is mentioned is that of the Gospel of the Kingdom, but that Gospel is not now preached, for we preach the Gospel of Grace. When we turn to the different verses we shall go carefully over this theory again and disprove it by what is written.

There remains the third way of interpreting these words of our Lord, it is to look upon these predictions about the end of the Jewish age as being still future. This is the right and only key to understand these verses. The first part of the Olivet discourse of our Lord is a prediction of how the Jewish age will end. The disciples only knew of a Jewish age. This Jewish age has not yet ended; it has been interrupted. A careful study of the great prophecy in Daniel ix:24-27 reveals the fact that one year-week, the seventieth, has not yet been fulfilled. The Christian age, in which God visits the Gentiles and takes out a people for His name, the church, is the great parenthesis, which has come in between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week of Daniel. As soon as the purpose of God is fulfilled, the church complete, the Lord will resume His dealing with Israel and the seventieth week (seven years) will end the Jewish age. Before that end, the seventieth week can come, the church must be complete and be removed from these earthly scenes, according to the divinely revealed destin-

of the church. The church complete and taken up, the end of the age will follow and that will be Jewish and as far as the so-called "christian world" is concerned one of complete apostasy. Then the 144,000 of whom we read in Rev. vii will be sealed and bear their witness. This is the Jewish remnant and the exhortations here concern them. No doubt when the time comes they will find great comfort here in the words of our Lord. They will preach the Gospel of the kingdom and the unfinished testimony, of which we read in Matthew x, will be finished by them. Thus the disciples the Lord addressed were typical of similar Jewish disciples living after the church has ceased her testimony. A striking fact is that this interpretation can be verified by many Scripture passages from the Old Testament. The teaching of a future remnant of Jewish believers, suffering and witnessing for God during the great tribulation, is very pronounced in the Old Testament. We shall have occasion to turn to some of these Scripture references when we come to the different verses. The Old Testament predicts a siege of Jerusalem which has not yet been. The reader in turning to Zechariah xiv will find a full description of what awaits Jerusalem and a faithful remnant in the end time. Though Jerusalem has had so many sieges in the past there is not one which could be said to be a fulfilment of Zechariah xiv. The Lord Himself appears for the deliverance of His people, His feet standing on the Mount of Olives. Matthew xxiv:4-44 refers to this, and His coming and all His saints with Him in Zechariah corresponds to "the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

In the second part of this discourse, chapter xxiv:45-xxv:30, we find that the Lord speaks in an entirely different way. He mentions no longer the tribulation, nor

the Sabbath or Judea. He speaks again in parables. These parables, each one having for its central thought, His coming again, relate not to the Christian church as some have expressed it, but rather to the Christian profession. We notice the true and the false throughout. A faithful servant and an evil servant; wise virgins and foolish virgins; servants who use their talents and one who does not. Here, then, we have the revelation of the judgement between the true and the false.

The third part, chapter xxv:31-40, is not a revelation concerning the universal judgment; no such judgment is ever mentioned in the Bible. The Lord describes the judgment of nations which takes place when he sits upon the throne of His glory.

The first part of the Olivet Discourse, verses 4-44, is now before us. At the close of the previous chapter we learn that the King after His loving outburst over Jerusalem had made the declaration, "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate." This prophecy is fulfilled throughout this present age. In the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter we read that the Lord left the temple. "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to show Him the buildings of the temple." There is a strongly marked correspondency between the end of the twelfth chapter and the beginning of the thirteenth and the close of the twenty-third and the beginning of the twenty-fourth. At the close of the twelfth chapter the Lord by His symbolical action in refusing to see His mother and brethren, declared His relationship with His own to whom He had come, and who received Him not, broken; at the close of the twenty-third there is a fuller break with the nation, the nation for whom He came to die. In Matthew xiii it is recorded that on the same day Jesus went out of the house, and

sat by the seaside, giving there His parables concerning the kingdom of the heavens. In the twenty-fourth He also goes out and departs, to give soon after the great Olivet discourse. While His parables, the mysteries of the kingdom, relate to this present age and the end of the age, in a general way, in the first part of the Olivet discourse, He makes known the details of that ending of the age, of which He spoke repeatedly in the thirteenth of Matthew.

In leaving the temple and going towards the Mount of Olives, the Lord had to cross over the brook Cedrón, and in ascending the mountain, they must have had a magnificent view of the temple buildings. These buildings were of the most massive construction, some of them still in process of erection. An enormous wall encircled the whole temple area; some of the stones used in that wall were 23 and 24 feet in length. It must have been a wonderful sight for human eyes to behold. Not a word had come from the disciples' lips during the events recorded in the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters. They had heard His answers to the tempting Pharisees, and the pronunciation upon them. They listened to His loving outburst over Jerusalem and heard His prediction of the desolation of their house. But now they call His attention to the buildings of the temple, to the great sight before them. "And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." What a solemn prediction this was! How it must have impressed these Jewish men, His disciples, whose hearts clung to the temple and its wonderful buildings. These mighty stones, so solidly put together, were to be rent asunder, not one remaining upon the other. Only the Lord could make such a

prediction. Here then is a prediction which refers to the destruction of the temple in the great catastrophe which came upon Jerusalem in the year 70. It is, as stated before, fully given by our Lord in Luke xxi:20-24: What should happen to the rebellious city, to the murderers, the Lord had revealed in the parable of the marriage feast, when He said: "But when the king heard it he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city."

"And as He was sitting upon the Mount of Olives the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what is the sign of Thy Coming and the completion of the age?"

The question asked by the disciples is threefold. When shall these things be? The sign of Thy Coming? The completion or consummation of the age? It is of great importance to see that the record of the discourse, as given by the Holy Spirit, passes over the answer to the first question, "When shall these things be?" This is evident by the fact that the Lord says not a word in the discourse of Jerusalem or the destruction of the temple, and as stated in our introduction to this chapter, while in Luke we hear that Jerusalem is to be besieged by armies, and the inhabitants are seen falling by the edge of the sword and led away captive into all the nations and Jerusalem trodden down by the Gentiles; in Matthew xxiv we do not find a word of all this at all. Indeed we read of great distress, which is to be in Judea, but nothing whatever of them being led away captive, or Jerusalem to be trodden down by the Gentiles. Instead of a scattering of the elect people at the close of the great tribulation, we have a gathering of the elect. The word in the passage (xxiv:31), that is the word "elect" refers to the literal Israel.

Turning to the next two questions, "What is the sign of Thy coming and the completion of the age?" it is to be said that undoubtedly in the minds of the disciples this question was one. He had repeatedly spoken about His return. As true Jews they expected, and that with perfect right, the establishment of the messianic kingdom by the Messiah. They had seen how He, in whom they had believed, and the kingdom He offered, had been rejected. All, of necessity, must have been very misty before their view; but they take heart and ask Him about the sign of His coming, the coming He had mentioned before. It is evident that the coming is His coming in power and glory for the establishment of the kingdom promised to Israel in the Old Testament. This coming is His visible and glorious return to the earth "in like manner as He went up into heaven"; it takes place in the land and His feet will stand on the mount of Olives. The synoptic Gospels know of no other coming of the Lord than His visible return to Jerusalem; connected with this return we find always besides blessings, judgment. Entirely different is His coming for His Saints who compose the Church. This coming is revealed through the Apostle Paul in I Thessalonians, the fourth chapter. There we read that the Lord will descend into the air, not to the earth. The dead in Christ will be raised and the living saints be caught up, together with them, in clouds to meet the Lord *in the air* and to be forever with the Lord. In John xiv the Lord gives a little word which may be taken to indicate that coming for His own, though the manner is not made known. It is that word of comfort to His own. "I will come again and receive you unto myself." It is strange that believers in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ can fail to see the strongly marked difference between His visible and glori-

ous return, His coming in power and great Glory, taking place in the land of Israel and His coming for His Church, as revealed exclusively through the great Apostle. It is not strange that where this distinction is given up confusion and error result.

Then they asked about the completion or consummation of the age. The authorized version simply has it "the end of the world." That is a translation which is responsible for much wrong teaching. The end of the world as generally understood in Christendom is not at all in view here. It is the consummation, the winding up of the age, the *aion*. As we have shown this age could not be the "Christian age," but it is the ending of the Jewish age, which is still future. Such an age ending predicts the entire Old Testament prophetic World.

There we find numerous predictions of a great coming day, the day of the Lord, in which Jehovah is visibly seen in His Glory and majesty, coming forth to deliver His persecuted and downtrodden earthly people, who wait for Him and to judge the nations likewise. According to Old Testament prophecy this day of the Lord's visible and glorious manifestation is preceded by a time of great trouble and distress. The center of the tribulation is Jerusalem, and when the height of the tribulation is reached, the heavens and the earth are shaken and Jehovah appears. Furthermore it is seen that there is a believing and suffering remnant of Jews passing through that time of trouble, who are faithful in the midst of universal apostasy, wickedness and worship of the false king, who is likewise described in the Prophets. Their prayers and calls upon God are prophetically recorded by the Spirit of God as well as their deliverance by the manifestation of Jehovah. Now all this has never been fulfilled. That great day so often spoken of by the

Prophets, the day of the Lord, has not yet come; it is still future. So is the time of distress, which is called "the time of Jacob's trouble," and therefore the suffering of a Jewish remnant, which is not identified with the church is likewise future. When the Lord speaks in Matthew xxiv about the consummation of the age and the signs of His coming, He gives altogether that which is revealed in the Old Testament and which has not been fulfilled up to the present time. The purpose of God in this present Christian age is to take out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name. This taken out people is the Church. As long as this calling out through the preaching of the Gospel continues and new members are added to the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ (the church), the predicted end of the age does not come. Besides having a description of the end of the age, of which our Lord speaks here, in the Old Testament we have also one in the Book of Revelation. From the sixth chapter on to the nineteenth we find another record of the future age-ending. In studying the account our Lord gives here in Matthew we must compare Old Testament prophecy and the visions of the Book of Revelation, with what the Lord saith in His discourse. If our interpretation is the right one there must be perfect harmony between these three: Old Testament Prophecy: Matthew xxiv:4-44, and Revelation vi-xix.

And now we turn to the text and give the first section of the discourse. "And Jesus answering said to them, See that no one mislead you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall mislead many. But ye will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that ye be not disturbed; for all these things must take place, but it is not yet the end. For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,

and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. But all these are the beginning of the throes. Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall kill you and ye will be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then will many be offended, and will deliver one another up, and hate one another; and many false prophets shall arise and shall mislead many; and because lawlessness shall prevail, the love of the most shall grow cold; but he that endureth to the end, he shall be saved. And these glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations; and then shall the end come" (verses 4-14).

These are the opening words of the Lord, which describe the age ending. In a secondary and general way they likewise describe, no doubt, the characteristics of the times during which the Lord is not on the earth. Looked upon in this light what an argument they form against the modern optimistic dreams of the professing church! Neither the Lord, nor the Spirit in giving the Epistles of the New Testament have a single word to say that this present age and the world is to be getting better and that the end will be righteousness and peace. The testimony of the Scriptures is wholly on the other side. Wars there have been all along as well as rumors of wars. Famines, pestilences and earthquakes have again and again swept over this globe, as well as the persecution of such who are the Lord's. All this is true in a general way. But the Lord describes not the age as such, but shows what will be in the end. The words we have before us refer us to the beginning of that end, while in the last verse quoted, the fourteenth, the Lord saith "then shall come the end." What follows the fourteenth verse then refers directly to the end. The last

week of Daniel, the seventieth, is marked off in two halves, each having three and a half years. The words here before us up to the fourteenth verse refer to the first half of the last week, while the fifteenth verse and the verses which follow bring us to the middle of that week.

Verses 4-14 then contain the prophecy of our Lord relating to the beginning of the end of the Jewish age, while with the 15th verse the end itself in its fearful great tribulation and "the abomination of desolation" is described. The whole period is the last week of Daniel's great prophecy, a prophetic week, consisting of seven years, which cannot begin as long as the church is on the earth. The first part of it is now before us. The Lord saith in His answer to the question concerning the sign of His coming and the end of the age, that these things He mentions first are "the beginning of throes" (verse 8).

And now let us look at the predictions. We find them in the following order:

1. Many coming, saying, I am the Christ and succeeding in misleading many.

2. Wars, rumors of wars. Nation lifting up sword against nation. Kingdom against kingdom.

3. Famines and pestilences and earthquakes.

4. Many witnesses to be killed and hated by all nations. False prophets and lawlessness prevailing.

5. The preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom before the end is reached.

These are the startling prophecies of our Lord, soon to be followed by other predictions of what shall be before He returns in the clouds of heaven, immediately after the tribulation of those days. The disciples, all Jews, no doubt well versed in the Old Testament Scrip-

tures, must have had considerable knowledge of such awful events as described by the Lord, for Old Testament prophecy predicts precisely such troubles preceding the visible manifestation of Jehovah out of the opened heavens, the beginning of the restoration of His earthly people and the blessings of the coming age. The following passages are but a few of those which might be quoted: Joel ii:1-17; Hosea v:14; Jer. xxx:4-9; Ezekiel xxi:27; Daniel xii:1; Micah vii:1-7; Hab. iii:16. It is also true that Jewish tradition maintained in fullest harmony with these teachings that the days preceding the glorious coming of the Messiah are to be days of woe and sorrow. One of these ancient traditions is so striking that we quote it.

Rabbi Jochunan says: "Seven years of trouble come before Messiah comes. The first year before the Son of David comes the prophecy of Amos (chap. iv:7) will be fulfilled. In the second year of tribulation there will be six months of famine. In the third year there will be great famine. Many men, women and children will die and the pious will be few. The law and the prophets will be forgotten by Israel. The last years will bring signs in heaven and wars and at the end of the seventh year the Son of David will come." Similar statements could be easily quoted from the Talmudical writings.

All that which the above Old Testament passages predict, a time of trouble, before an age of blessing begins and nations learn war no more, is still a matter of the future, and so are the predictions our Lord makes here. The disciples to whom He gives these words and warnings are typical representatives of disciples, who will live when that end comes; they will be Jewish disciples. When on the Mount of Olives, before His ascension, they asked Him their *last* question: "Lord, is it at this

time that Thou restorest the Kingdom to Israel?" He answered: "It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father has placed in His own authority" (Acts i:6-7). The kingdom will be restored with the coming of the King. It was not revealed when it was to be; all was to be postponed. They passed off the scene. When the end at last will come other Jewish disciples, waiting for the kingdom to be restored to Israel, will witness and suffer, and they will turn to these words of our Lord and find comfort and instruction in them.

And now there is something still more significant. Not alone does Old Testament prophecy predict distress for the ending of the Jewish age, but we have an additional description of these great coming events in the last book of the Bible, the only book of prophecy in the New Testament, that glorious book, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

The book is divinely divided into three parts (chapter i:9): I. The things seen; Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks (chapter i). II. The things which are. The present church age; a wonderful prophecy concerning the history of the church (chapters ii and iii) III. The things which shall be after these (chapter iv to xxii). Here follows all which will take place after the church has completed her history. The removal of the true church from earth to heaven is promised in the third chapter of Revelation and is indicated in the opening verses of the fourth chapter. In the fourth and fifth chapters the church is seen symbolically in the twenty-four elders, seated, clothed and crowned in the presence of the throne. Then the Lamb takes the book to break its seals. That which is revealed, beginning with the sixth chapter, the breaking of the seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets and the outpouring of the seven vials

together with the great events described from that chapter to the nineteenth, is nothing else but a more detailed history of the last week of Daniel. It is here in the last book of the Bible fully revealed what judgment will be executed upon the earth during that period of distress and what great tribulation will be for those who dwell upon the earth, Jews and Gentiles (never the true church). It is an intensely interesting fact that this part of Revelation (chapters vi-xix) ever points us back to Old Testament prophecy. Hundreds of passages from all the prophets can easily be put alongside of the visions of judgment, tribulation and wrath in the Apocalypse.

The point which we wish to make is the following: If this is the correct interpretation, if Matthew xxiv:4-14 refers to the beginning of that coming end of the age and if Revelation vi refers to the same beginning of the end and that which follows the sixth chapter leads us on into the great tribulation, then there must be a perfect harmony between that part of the Olivet discourse contained in Matthew xxiv and the part of Revelation beginning with the sixth chapter. *And such is indeed the case.*

We turn briefly to the sixth chapter of Revelation. The Lamb opens one of the seals, after that great worship scene in heaven had taken place. Then we read: "And I saw; and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon it having a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering and that he might conquer." It is strange that so many expositors have expounded this to be the Lord Himself. The Lord indeed is described in this book as coming riding a white horse; but this description is found at the close of the Revelation in the nineteenth chapter. The rider upon the white horse under the first seal is a counterfeit. He is a false Christ, who goes forth to conquer. His conquest is a

bloodless one, as he has only a bow. He will bring about a false peace among the nations, which for a time may have been alarmed by the supernatural removal of the church. The second rider "takes peace from the earth," from which we would conclude that the first rider upon the white horse (white the emblem of peace) had established peace.

And as we turn to Matthew xxiv we find that the first thing our Lord saith, is about the deceivers who will come with the beginning of the age ending saying: "I am Christ," and succeeding to lead away many. It is true throughout this age impostors came among the Jews claiming to be the Messiah. It is true even now men rise up saying they are some great one, Elijah, prophets or even Christ.

All these are but faint shadows of what will take place in that soon coming end. Indeed the increasing delusions and the claims of, as we believe, demon-possessed men and women, are strong indications that the end is very near. Then deceivers, led by Satan, possessed by his demons, will arise and among them there will be a mighty leader going forth to conquer, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

The rider upon the red horse, as already stated, takes peace from the earth. The second seal shows him coming forth with a great sword, "that they should slay one and another."

And the very next thing which the Lord saith in Matthew xxiv is, "But ye will hear of wars and rumors of wars * * * Nation shall lift up sword against nation and kingdom against kingdom" (verse 7). Wars there have been in the past; this earth is saturated with blood. But there will be a time, and it is soon coming, when literally nation will lift up sword against nation and

kingdom against kingdom, when they will slay each other. Any one who follows present-day history will see how everything is ripening for just such a universal warfare. And yet secure, sleeping Christendom is dreaming of peace, world wide peace and times of prosperity!

The third the Lord mentions is "there shall be famines." And the third seal reveals a rider upon a black horse and he has a balance in his hand and what he saith indicates clearly that he brings famines (Rev. vi:5-6). The fourth rider of the fourth seal is upon a pale horse. His name is "Death." He takes the fourth part of the earth away. This corresponds to the Lord's announcement that there will be "pestilences and earthquakes in divers places." Fearful have been the famines, pestilences and earthquakes of the last twenty-five years.* But these are insignificant in comparison with those to which our Lord refers here, the mighty events which tell all the earth that the day of wrath is rapidly approaching. Blessed be His name, who delivereth us from that wrath to come that "His Beloved," "His Dove," "His Bride," the church, will be safe within when these awful things come to pass.

And now under the fifth seal we do not behold another rider, but instead of it we hear the souls underneath the altar, that had been slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they gave, crying out with a loud voice, saying, How long? (Rev. vi:9-11.) Who are these? Not saints of the church. These are all raised up when the Lord comes into the air (1 Thess. iv:17)

*Especially great has been the loss of life and property from earthquakes and volcanic disturbances since 1900. The last, the destruction of San Francisco, has been one of the most terrible of the recent catastrophes. A harbinger indeed of the nearness of the far greater earthquakes to come.

and are caught up with the living saints. They are such of the remnant of Jews who began to give their witness for the Word of God after the church had departed and they suffered martyrdom in consequence of their faithful testimony. It is exactly that of which our Lord speaks next in His discourse. "Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation and shall kill you; ye will be hated of all the nations for my name's sake." As we shall show later this faithful Jewish remnant will go throughout the world proclaiming the coming of the kingdom and calling to repentance.

We see then how striking the agreement is between the beginning of Matthew xxiv and the book of Revelation, the seal judgments. The interpretation we have undertaken to give is therefore proven to be correct.

We point out but a few more of the facts mentioned by our Lord. False prophets shall arise misleading many. The Jewish age has false prophets; the Christian age has *false teachers.* "But there were false prophets also among the people, as there shall be also among you false teachers, who shall bring in by the bye destructive heresies, etc." (2 Pet. ii:1). These false prophets who come in the end of the Jewish age will be possessed by evil spirits. Such was the case during the great apostasy of Israel under the reign of Ahab. The Lord permitted then a lying spirit to take possession of the false prophets as revealed by the prophet Micaiah (2 Chronicles xviii:-18-22).

"Lawlessness shall prevail;" that is, complete anarchy will hold sway. This too is clearly seen in the breaking of the sixth seal (Rev. vi:12-17). The earthquake, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, the falling stars, the rolled up heavens and the removal of mountains and islands are all great symbols of startling political events,

which will take place in the first three and one-half years. Government and authority is swept away; civil and ecclesiastical powers are shaken; mountains (the type of kingdoms) are moved out of their places and as a consequence of this awful upheaval, the reign of terror and anarchy, worse than that of the French revolution and the Russian revolution of to-day, all classes of men, the kings, the wealthy, the rich and the poor, the bondman and the free, will be seized with terror. Well has a recent writer said: "The scene here described is an awful and sublime one. The symbols employed to set it forth are the powers of nature convulsed. The whole fabric of civil and governmental power on earth breaks up. Disorder reigns supreme. It is not simply the collapse of this or that government, but the total subversion of all governing authority—both supreme and dependent. The general idea which the metaphors present is a universal overthrow of all existing authority; a revolutionary crisis of such magnitude and character that kings and slaves are in equal terror. The coming crash will involve in one general catastrophe everything on earth deemed secure and strong. A vast civil and political chaos will be created. What an awful scene to contemplate! a world without a magistrate! without even the semblance of power! without government! without the authority of repression!"

This is the sixth seal, and it is precisely what the Lord saith: "Lawlessness shall prevail." And later the lawless One will take the lead. He comes into full display in the middle of the week. How near, how very near all these events are, even at our doors, is seen by the increasing unrest of all nations, the manifestation of the spirit of anarchy among all people. Yet there is One who hindereth (2 Thess. ii). The Holy Spirit

is the One who keeps it back and He has His abode in the body of Christ, the church. Only after the church is taken into glory can that lawless One be revealed. But even in those awful days the mercy of God lingers and one more great testimony goes forth; the Gospel of the kingdom will yet be preached in a very short time to all the nations, then the end comes.

"And these glad tidings of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all nations, and then shall come the end" (verse 14). This verse relates exclusively to the end of the age, that is the Jewish age. And here we have to speak of all of the wrong application of this word of our Lord.

It is generally looked upon as a condition to be fulfilled before the Lord can come. Post-millennialism, believing as it does, without any authority from the Word of God, in the conversion of the world before the Coming of the Lord, makes use of this verse to uphold its unscriptual theory. Then there are others who believe in the premillennial coming of Christ who misapply this statement of our Lord. They ever speak of preaching the Gospel to all the nations as a necessary condition before the Lord can come for the church. It is often pressed in this way in missionary meetings, conventions as an incentive to giving, that unless the Gospel is preached to all nations, the Lord cannot come. Now such an application of this verse is certainly wrong.

It is true that the Gospel is to be preached in the regions beyond and that by this preaching a people is called out from the Gentiles, a people for His name, the church; but it would be incorrect to say that in order that the Lord may come for His Church, all the individuals of all the nations must hear the Gospel. Believers in the blessed Hope of the Coming of the Lord have a

deep interest in foreign missions, unless they are given to extreme, fanciful or unscriptural notions. This is clearly established by a number of foreign missionary enterprises of the last twenty-five years, which have been inaugurated by men who believe in the premillennial Coming of the Lord and also by the large number of missionaries in all lands, who are out and out premillennialists. The accusation that believing in the imminent Coming of the Lord paralyzes missionary efforts is unjust and unfair. It stimulates missionary activity. The believer in the Coming of the Lord desires the Gospel to be preached in the great, wide field of the nations, that the church may be completed as to numbers. How soon this may be none can tell.

If the verse before us contained a necessary condition before the Lord can come to receive His fellow heirs, the church, in Glory, then the end must be indefinitely postponed. Other difficulties arise if this were the case.

But let us look at this preaching of this Gospel as in the future and all will become clear. In the first place must we remind ourselves that it is at the end of the age that the glad tidings of the Kingdom are to be heralded through the earth. The end of which the Lord speaks, the termination of that Jewish age, as we shall see later in this chapter, will be the visable manifestation of the Son of Man in power and in glory out of the opened heavens. The glorified church, the Lamb's wife, comes forth with Him in that visible manifestation.

Let us then have this fixed first of all, the preaching of which the Lord speaks is a future witness to all the nations, and that witness must be given before His visible manifestation will take place.

In the next place we have to ascertain what witness

will be given. It will be the proclamation of the glad tidings, or Gospel, of the Kingdom. What does this mean? Superficial readers of the Word of God make no difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace. Many speak of the preaching of John the Baptist and the Lord and His disciples in the first part of Matthew, when they announced "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," as if it were the same thing as the Gospel of Grace, which is so freely offered after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace.

What then is the Gospel of the Kingdom? As we learn in the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of the Kingdom is the good news that the promised Kingdom* of the Old Testament was about to be established with the manifestation of the King. But the nation rejected Him and rejected the offered Kingdom. Some time after the day of Pentecost this Gospel of the Kingdom was preached to the nation. It was to Jews that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom when Peter declared unto them after the healing of the lame man, he being a type of the nation (Acts iii:1), "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached to you; whom the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts iii:19-20). This was the

*Our lecture on the Kingdom in the Old Testament, published in tract form, will give more complete information about the Kingdom.

good news of the Kingdom. If the nation had then repented and accepted the renewed offer, the Lord would have come again and with His coming the restitution of all things as foretold by all the prophets. This restitution, of course, does *not* consist in the resurrection and restoration of the wicked dead, as an unscriptural restitutionism claims, but in the glorious things of the earthly Kingdom and the promised blessings to Israel. Soon the nation rejected the last offer in the stoning of Stephen. The measure was full. In the Old Testament Jehovah had offered Himself to them as their King and they had rejected Him. Then He came manifested in the flesh and they rejected Him, God the Son. Then the Holy Spirit in Stephen's testimony was likewise rejected.

With that event the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom ceased. Another Gospel was preached. The Lord gave it to the great Apostle, whom He called Himself, Paul. And Paul calls this Gospel "my Gospel." It is the Gospel of God's free Grace to all who believe, the Gospel of the Glory of God, the Gospel of a risen and glorified Lord. The mystery of the church is made known to Paul, and it is part of that blessed Gospel that every believing sinner, Jew or Gentile, is baptized by the one Spirit into the one body. This Baptism took place on the day of Pentecost. The Gospel of Grace declares that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are quickened together with Him, raised up and seated with Him in the Heavenly, that they are Sons of God and Heirs of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. This then is the Gospel of Grace. This wonderful offer goes out now to the nations of the earth that the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ may be gathered. It had a definite beginning, it will have a definite end. When

that body, the church, is complete, the church will be removed from the earth in the manner as revealed in 1 Thess. iv:16-17, and with this the preaching of the Gospel of Grace will come to an end, because the purpose for which God had this Gospel proclaimed is accomplished.

Now during the time that the Kingdom was preached to be at hand the Gospel of Grace was not heard, and during the time the Gospel of Grace is preached the Gospel of the Kingdom is not preached. But as soon as the Gospel of Grace has fulfilled its mission and is no longer heard, the glad tidings of the kingdom will be preached again.

As soon then as the church leaves this earthly scene and the end of the age begins, the Gospel of Grace will no more be heard, but in place of it, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be sounded forth once more to all the nations, before the heavens, silent for so many, many centuries, will be opened again to reveal the King, who comes to execute judgment and to rule the earth in righteousness. Under the solemn signs of the ending Jewish age it will be proclaimed world wide, "Fear God and give Glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come and worship Him that made heaven and the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." The Kingdom is at hand; repent!

And who will be the preachers of this last witness, the missionaries who reach all nations with this final message before the King appears in judgment? They are a believing Israelitish remnant. God in His wonderful grace will begin a work among His earthly people Israel. The Holy Spirit, who has His abode, as long as the church is forming, in the church, will have accomplished His mission in the completed body and will no longer

be present on the earth as He is now; but He will still be working and that in the same way as He did in the Old Testament, He will come upon a remnant of believers from the long blinded nation Israel. These will take up the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations, and no doubt special power will rest upon them for that service. How well this people is fitted to do this, needs little comment. They are now scattered among all the nations. They understand the languages of the nations, they are at home in every climate. When the church is no longer here, God in His mercy will turn to His own people again and the blindness of a company of them will be removed and the Spirit of God will come upon them. We believe this remnant will most likely consist of such Hebrews who are at this time still holding to the Messianic hope of a coming deliverer, who hold fast the law and the testimony, who firmly believe in the prophecies of their own Scriptures. Alas! hundreds of thousands have broken with the faith in God's Word and God's promises.

Such a remnant according to the election of Grace (Romans xi) will be called, and this remnant will be used as the great herald to announce to all the nations the great coming events. What preachers they will be!

And now before we look at the purpose of this preaching and to whom they will go and what their sucess will be, we have to follow the argument laid down in the beginning of the exposition of this chapter. We remind the reader that we claimed that inasmuch as these predictions of our Lord refer to the end of the Jewish age, that we must be able to find all what is spoken of here both in the Old Testament and in that part of the book of Revelation, which treats of the things to come, after the history of the church is finished on earth (chapters vi-xix).

We have found already the remarkable correspondency which exists between the predictions of the Old Testament concerning the time of distress of the end of the age, the predictions of our Lord and the seal judgments of Revelation. Is there a similar agreement about a witnessing remnant of God's earthly people? Has the Old Testament anything to say about this? Do we find anything mentioned about such a remnant in the book of Revelation? Both Old Testament prophecy and the book of Revelation give us most interesting light on this remnant, the testimony they will bear, the suffering and the persecution they will have to stand, and their final deliverance.

The Old Testament is full of predictions and descriptions of this remnant. Indeed it is next to impossible to understand prophecy relating to the things to come if one does not reckon with that remnant, which is so prominent in the pre-written history of the end of the age. Especially rich is the book of Psalms. The great prayers, cries to God for deliverance, calls to God to destroy the enemies, are all prophetic descriptions of how a faithful remnant of God's earthly people will go through that time of great trouble and be delivered out of it. In these great prayers and calls upon God for interference, the ungodly part of the nation as well as the Gentiles are mentioned. Showing how they are in the midst of them giving their faithful testimony. It would be impossible to show all the passages which speak of this future remnant in the Old Testament. Almost throughout every one of the prophets do we find this remnant and the words which God speaks to encourage and comfort them.

Turning to the book of Revelation we find a very striking confirmation of this fact. We found that un-

der the sixth seal a great upheaval took place. Anarchy is let lose and all the mighty governments of the earth are shaken, rebellion spreads worldwide. Before the seventh seal is broken by the Lord we read of something else. The seventh chapter of Revelation is a parenthesis. The first part of it tells us that then in the beginning of these fearful events, a company of 144,000 will be sealed. Who is this company? It is a most fanciful, worse than that, evil interpretation, which makes of the 144,000 a company of Christian believers. The theory of a "first-fruit" rapture has no scriptural foundation whatever and it aims in a most subtle way at God's Grace, giving man a share, by his attainments, experience, suffering and other things, to become worthy to enter into the presence of the Lord. We have listened to such teaching repeatedly that the 144,000 of Revelation vii are a company of "sanctified" Christians (as if there were sanctified and unsanctified believers). Companies of people all over this country claim to be part of "the elect Bride," a part of the 144,000, and not a few of these hold extremely fanatical views. The Word of God makes it so clear that it is almost impossible to believe that any intelligent person could fail to see who these 144,000 are. The Spirit of God tells us that they are "of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Christian believers do not belong to the twelve tribes of the children of Israel; furthermore, if these 144,000 were parts of the church, a first-fruit, the previous part of Revelation, especially chapters ii-v, would be most difficult to explain, and the divinely given division of the book would be wiped out. The 144,000 then are literal Israelites and these constitute the remnant of God's earthly people, the preachers of the Kingdom Gospel during the great tribulation.

In the second part of Revelation vii we read of a countless multitude out of all nations, who have come out of the great tribulation and who stand before the throne of God. This multitude is not the church, because the church does not come "out of the great tribulation," nor do the church saints stand before the throne, but they are seated upon thrones in the presence of the throne of God (Rev. iv). This great multitude are those who heard God's last witness during the end of the age, the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel and who believed the message and were yet saved and we see these in the presence of the throne of God, their millennial position and blessing in the earth. The multitude is the blessed result of the preaching of the remnant of Israel.

It is, however, to be stated that those who had the Gospel of Grace presented unto them and who rejected God's gracious offer, who went on in apostasy will not have another chance to accept "the Gospel of the Kingdom." Second Thess. ii:10-12 reveals the fate of all the Christ and Gospel rejecting professing "Christian" masses. But the nations in Africa, China, India, the isles of the sea will hear and accept the Gospel of the Kingdom and gladly receive these messengers whom later the Lord calls *"these my brethren"* (Matthew xxv:31, etc). Thus during the very end, God's Grace will still be manifested ere that great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

The next verse brings us into the middle of the week, the great tribulation, and we shall have to turn to the prophet Daniel and the thirteenth chapter of Revelation to establish still clearer the fact that our Lord has in these predictions exclusive reference to the end of the Jewish age.

We have learned then that the events predicted by our Lord up to the fourteenth verse fall into the beginning of the ending of the Jewish age, the seven prophetic years; with the fifteenth verse we reach the middle of this period, three years and a half are passed and the second half with its mighty events culminating in the personal and visible manifestation of the Son of Man out of heaven is now described. With the second half of these seven years, the last 1,260 days, the great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, is fully developed. We shall find as we advance that not alone the interpretation we have laid down for this chapter is the right one, but that no other one is possible; all expositions, which claim a fulfilment of these words of our Lord in the past, or which apply these events to the church period, must be rejected as incorrect. Let us read the words of our Lord beginning at the fifteenth verse.

"When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in what is a holy place (he that reads let him understand); then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let not him that is on the house come down to take the things out of his house; and let not him that is in the field turn back to take his garment. But woe to those that are with child, and those that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight may not be in winter time nor on Sabbath; for then shall there be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now nor ever shall be; and if those days had not been cut short no flesh had been saved; but on account of the elect those days shall be cut short" (verses 15-22).

Our Lord gives us a most important hint on what He means by these words, by mentioning the Prophet Dan-

iel. Then furthermore, the Holy Spirit adds through Matthew a word of exhortation, which calls special attention to the Lord's reference to Daniel, the prophet. The Holy Spirit saith, "He that reads let him understand"; or, as it might be put, "Consider so as to understand." It will, therefore, not do for us to hurry over this word of our Lord, to which the Holy Spirit calls our special attention, which He the great interpreter of the Word of God wants us to consider and to understand fully.

We must, therefore, turn first of all to the Prophet Daniel. Does he mention anything in his great prophecies about a future abomination and where do we find these passages? He does in three places.

"And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and because of the protection of the abominations there shall be a desolator, even until that the consumption and what is determined shall be poured out upon the desolate" (Daniel ix:27).

"And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, the fortress, and shall take away the continual sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate" (xi:31).

"And from the time that the continual sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (xii:11).

There can be no doubt that the Lord refers to these three passages in Daniel, and it is of that abomination mentioned in these passages of which He speaks. These three verses in Daniel refer all to the same period of time; this period is three years and a half. The same space of time is mentioned in Daniel vii:25. "And he

shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hands, until a time and times and the dividing of time" (which makes three and a half). Then in Daniel x:7 we have it mentioned again. * * * "It shall be for a time, times and a half, and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." When later in the course of this exposition we come to the book of Revelation we shall discover the same period of time there.

It is not our purpose to enter fully into Daniel's great prophecies. To do this would lead us too far and prolong our exposition. The most important passage of the three we have quoted, is the one from the ninth chapter; as the others treat of the same period, we shall not consider these (Dan. xi: 31 and xii:11) at all. The ninth chapter in that prophetic book contains the prayer of Daniel and the wonderful answer he received. He was meditating on the Word of the Lord as it came to Jeremiah the prophet, when he turned to the Lord in prayer. This seems to us is the true and perfect way of turning to God in prayer. First communion with God through the written Word, His revelation, and then to seek His face. He was occupied in his prayer with the years of captivity. The man Gabriel appears, he came flying swiftly to assure him that he was greatly beloved and to give him the answer to his prayer. The answer is a revelation relating to seventy-year weeks, that is seven times seventy; a period of time which was to come.

We take it for granted that our readers are delivered from the old, superficial and erroneous interpretation, which looks upon Daniel ix:24-27 as having been com-

pletely fulfilled with the death of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. It is strange that the clear division of these seventy weeks has been so much ignored.* The 24th verse in Daniel ix is the prophecy stated in a general way. "Seventy weeks are apportioned out upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to close the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make expiation for iniquity, and to bring in the righteousness of ages, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies." Seventy sevens, as it is in the Hebrew, make 490. This space of time is, so Gabriel declared, apportioned out, for the people of Israel and Jerusalem, and at the close of it the full blessing of Israel will come to pass; the righteousness of ages, undoubtedly refers to the kingdom age, the millennium. So in a general way the whole prophecy of seventy-year weeks is given and what shall be accomplished in them and at the close of them for the people Israel and for Jerusalem. But now as we read on we find a division of these seventy weeks. First: *Seven weeks;* secondly: *Sixty-two weeks;* thirdly: *One week.* What does this division mean? We are not left to speculation, for the Word makes it plain. "Know, therefore, and understand: From the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street and the moat shall be built again, even in troublesome times. And after sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the

*To our readers who are unsettled on the interpretation of this most important prophecy, or who desire a real good work on Daniel ix, we recommend Sir R. Anderson's most excellent work, "The Coming Prince." It is most helpful, clearly written and sound. **It may be ordered from us.**

prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with an overflow, and unto the end war, the desolation determined (verses 25-26)." The first seven weeks, that is 49 years, is the period of time which elapsed from the giving of the command to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls till this was accomplished. The commission to restore and build Jerusalem was given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes in his twentieth year. The sixty-two weeks is the period of time from the complete restoration of the city and the walls till Messiah is cut off, that is the death of Christ, and there is nothing for Him. His own people reject Him and then in consequence of that rejection, the city and the sanctuary is to be destroyed by the people of the prince, that shall come. Wars and desolations, persecutions and troubles, bloodshed and sufferings, was to be the lot of the Jewish people after the rejection of the Messiah, a prophecy stated not only here but throughout the prophetic Word and so solemnly come true for well nigh two thousand years. The people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary were Romans. But now we have one week left. Of this last week we read in the last verse of Daniel ix, the verse in which the abomination is mentioned, to which our Lord and the Holy Spirit calls attention. This week, or seven years, is the end. It is a week, a period of time still future. With the 69th week Messiah was cut off, He had nothing; His people had rejected Him and the offered kingdom; an indefinite period follows, during which the Jews are outcasts, scattered into the corners of the earth, Jerusalem trodden down by the Gentiles. It is the present age in which we live, in which God's gracious offer of free and full salvation for the gathering out of a people for His Name (the church) is

preached. How soon this may end no one knows. It will end at some time and then Jewish history from a prophetic standpoint will be resumed, the Jewish age will close to be followed by the kingdom or millennial age, when the righteousness of the ages will come in.

And what then is to take place in that last week, in the coming seven years, that very time which was indicated in the question of the disciples when they asked about "the end of the age" and which the Lord describes in this part of His discourse? We say again it seems strange that so many learned men should be so superficial in expounding the Word of God. How true it is, many of these things are hid from the wise and the prudent; and they are revealed unto babes. Thus many have not alone made no distinction of the division of the weeks as given in the text, but they have not dstinguished between the two princes mentioned in these verses. The one Prince is Messiah, the other prince is a counterfeit, the false prince. It is claimed by this incorrect interpretation that the prince who confirms the covenant with the many for one week is Christ. But the one of whom the 27th verse speaks is not Messiah the Prince, but "the prince who shall come." It is that wicked head of the Roman empire in its last revived form of whom we read in different parts in prophecy. The Roman power had come upon the land and destroyed Jerusalem and burned the temple. This was prophetically stated in verse 26; but it does not say that "the prince shall come to destroy the city," but the people of the prince *"that shall come,"* in other words, the Roman power destroyed the city and from that power a prince is to emanate in the future. Up to now this prince has not yet appeared; when he comes he will be the leader of the confederacy of the

nations, who inhabit the territory of the Roman empire, a mighty man who is under the control and inspiration of Satan. Perhaps Napoleon I is the nearest photograph the world has seen of that prince who shall come. It would be most interesting to follow all this in detail, but we are not writing on Daniel or the false king and the anti-Christ, but on Matthew xxiv, and so we can only give the most simple facts so as to make the chapter as clear as possible. Now when this prince, the head of the revived Roman empire, appears, he will make a covenant with the Jews. His covenant will be for one week, that is for seven years. It is interesting to notice that the covenant will be made with "the many," not with all, for the believing Jewish remnant will know the true personality of the wicked prince and refuse to enter into that covenant. What this covenant will be we do not follow now. Suffice it to say that it will be undoubtedly of a political nature and connected with the resettlement of the Jews in Palestine, the rebuilding of the temple and the institution of their worship by sacrifices. Zionism, the great restoration movement of the Jews in unbelief, sheds a flood of light on these coming events. If Zionists were ready to herald the Sultan as their deliverer, should he allow them the practical carrying out of their programme, how much more will they will be willing to accept an agreement with that mighty prince, who is to come. This covenant will be effected in the beginning of the week (seven years) and all will run smoothly for a while. But in the middle of the week he will unmask himself and in conjunction with that other wicked one, the man of sin, the son of perdition, the personal anti-Christ, he will break the covenant and cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. In its place he will set up the abomination (Dan. xi:31). What then is this abomina-

tion? It will be idolatrous worship. The xiii chapter in the book of Revelation gives us more light on this abomination of the last three years and a half of the Jewish age ending. We shall turn to this chapter at once. However, before we do so we wish to say that to our mind the argument is complete. The seventy weeks have to do exclusively with the Jewish people. The first seven weeks, the sixty-two weeks and the last, the seventieth. *It is impossible to find a place for the church in this prophecy.* Her place is in the unreckoned period *between* the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. She does not belong, nor a part of the church, into the last week.

And now we shall briefly examine the book of Revelation on this subject. We have laid this down in the beginning of our exposition, if the words of our Lord refer to the future events of the definitely marked end of the age then these three, Old Testament prophecy on this theme, the Words of the Lord, and the book of Revelation must be a complete harmony. We have seen how perfectly this has been the case up to the fifteenth verse and now we have still more striking proof.

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation corresponds in part to the middle of the week; the last half of the seven years and the events transpiring on Jewish ground, in Jerusalem, are described here. Here we find the 1,260 days, the 3½ years. In the twelfth chapter Satan is seen cast out of heaven, cast down upon the earth and the heavens pronounce a woe upon the inhabiters of the earth, for he is come down and has great wrath, for he has but little time. When the church is received into glory, the casting out of Satan will take place. He comes down and finds the church gone from this earthly scene and then in his great wrath he begins his awful work.

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation is the perfect

counterpart of Daniel's prophecies; even a beginner in the study of prophecy can see that. Two beasts are seen in this chapter. The first rises out of the sea typifying the nations. The second comes out of the earth and has two horns like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. The first is "the prince that shall come," the wicked leader of the revived Roman empire; the second one is the false Messiah, the anti-Christ, who mimics the true Christ. What will then take place is clearly stated in Rev. xiii:12-18. There we read of an image. "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." This, no doubt, will be the abomination, an image worshipped; as well as the second beast, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God (not in Rome, but in Jerusalem), showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii:4). This then is the abomination which falls in the last half of the seventieth week. The result of this abomination, the revelation of Satan's power upon the earth, will be the great tribulation. This is fully borne out by the thirteenth chapter in Revelation. Of this our Lord speaks, when he said, "for then shall there be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world, until now, nor ever shall be." And in Daniel we likewise read of this tribulation. "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (xii:1). The context shows that it will be at this very time of which the Lord speaks, immediately before His personal, visible and glorious Coming.

The words which the Lord utters concerning those who will be then on the earth show clearly that they

are not church saints. They are in Judea and are asked to flee to the mountains; a foreshadowing of this was seen at the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. They are asked to pray that their flight should not take place on the Sabbath; they are called the "elect," a term which in this chapter as well as throughout the Gospels always means His earthly people; in the Epistles the word "elect" always means the church.

The next words of the Lord in His discourse contain warnings. "Then if any one say to you, Behold here is the Christ, or here, believe is not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold I have told you beforehand. If, therefore, they say to you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold he is in the inner chambers, do not believe it. For as the lightning goes forth from the east and shines to the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man" (verses 23-27). Deceivers have appeared from time to time throughout this age, claiming, like Simon Magus, "to be some great one." No question that many of these evil, fanatical leaders were and are energized by Satan. Not a few of such deluded persons we see to-day; the evil power likewise manifests its signs and lying wonders to a certain degree, while another system claims that the Lord Jesus Christ came in a secret manner in 1874 (Millennial Dawnism). But all this is not a fulfilment of the words spoken by the Lord. The fulfilment comes in the great tribulation. Of the second beast, who imitates the lamb, but speaks as a dragon, it is written, "He doeth great wonders so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of these miracles which he had power to do in the sight of

the beast" (Rev. xiii:13-14). This corresponds with that passage in 2 Thess. ii from which we quoted above; the false Christ will deceive by his signs and lying wonders and the strong delusion, all those who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Not alone will the apostate part of the Jewish people be deceived by these lying wonders, but also the apostate part of Christendom, left behind after the rapture of the church has taken place, will be deceived and swept away in the great judgments of that coming day. These warnings will be of great importance and value to the Jewish believing remnant, living in those days. The Lord tells them that His coming will not be in a secret way but openly, seen by all like the flash of lightning. It will be a sudden, a startling coming; as the lightning flashes over the dark sky and strikes down upon the earth, so will He the Son of Man make his appearance. It is not necessary to say that this lightning-like Coming is wholly distinct from His coming for His own. Then the Lord adds a significant word, "For wherever the carcase is, there will be gathered the eagles" (verse 28). The interpretation which makes the eagles the church, or a certain class of "advanced believers" is so weak and fanciful that we do not think it necessary to speak of it here. The carcase is the type of corruption and it represents here the unbelieving part of the Jewish people, that part which followed the beast. The eagles stand for the judgments. In the next verses the Coming of the Son of Man in Power and Glory is revealed by Himself, the coming One. Once more we shall have to turn back to the Old Testament and to the book of Revelation to find another perfect harmony.

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her

light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them" (verses 29-31).

It is unnecessary to call attention to the misinterpretation of this passage, which by the spiritualizing method claims a fulfillment of these words at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. What we have learned in the exposition of this part of the Olivet discourse makes such an application and interpretation an impossibility. It is ridiculous to say that the Lord spoke these words about His visible manifestation, but did not really mean a literal return; but what He meant is the destruction of Jerusalem. The context proves that the event could not have taken place at the time of the destruction of the city.

What is before us in these words of the Lord is the great climax of the end, the visible appearing of the Son of Man. It is to be *immediately* after the days of tribulation; that tribulation we have seen is still future and has for its center Jerusalem, though all the earth will share in it. And now we have to turn once more to the Old Testament Word of Prophecy. Do we find there anything promised, which corresponds to this predicted visible and glorious coming of the Son of Man? And if we find in the Old Testament prophecies which correspond to these words, in what connection do we find them?

We find indeed in the Old Testament numerous predictions of just such an event of which the Lord speaks here and a careful investigation will show that these pre-

dictions of the Old Testament and the prediction of our Lord here fully harmonize.

The first passage we desire to mention is a prophecy in the last chapter of Joel. "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel iii:15). Joel is one of the earliest prohpets. While he announces and speaks of a great locust judgment which came upon the people Israel and upon the land, his prophecy points to the great future fulfillment in the *"Yom Jehovah,"* the Day of the Lord. The third chapter contains one of the great prophecies of that future day and the events connected with that day. The verse we quoted gives the physical signs and the verses which follow show that the Lord will be manifested in His Glory in the midst of these wonders in the heavens. The prophets which prophesy after Joel have nearly all visions of that day.

We give a few other Scriptures to show this. "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright light will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxxii:7-8). Here it is the proclamation of the day as it is to come upon Egypt and the nations. Another prophecy of the day of the Lord's manifestation is found in Isaiah xiii:-9-10. "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." We do not need to quote other prophecies from the prophetic books and the Psalms. The day of the Lord

is announced in many passages. It is always seen in connection with great troubles on the earth, tribulation for His earthly people, culminating in these startling physical signs, darkened heavens, shaking earth and the manifestation of the Glory of the Lord. And this is the event of which our Lord speaks in Matthew xxiv:29.

But there will be not only physical signs, but something else will occur. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heaven. This will be followed by the mourning of the tribes and then the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

What is the sign of the Son of Man? We believe it will be the Shekinah cloud. It was a cloud which enshrouded His form when He tarried with Israel of old. A cloud it was which received Him out of the sight of His disciples; a cloud must bring Him back. At the bitter end of the great tribulation, when His faithful remnant is hard pressed on all sides, when they cry to God for the heavens to open and to come down, there will be seen, we believe, in the heavens a bright and shining cloud, a cloud from which fire shines out. Well may the believing Jewish remnant then cry out, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, this is the Lord, He will save us." His elect earthly people, those which have not been swept away during the great tribulation, the "all Israel" of Romans xi:26 will know what that cloud means. Jehovah is coming to be manifested. What their prophets saw and predicted is at last to come true. The Day of Jehovah is about to dawn, the Lord their King is coming.

The consequence will be a national mourning. It is not to be thought for a moment that all the tribes must be in the land. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens and will be seen from all continents. "All

the tribes of the land" simply means that the persons who mourn belong to all the tribes of Israel. This again is predicted in the OldTestament. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born" (Zech. xii:10). But that sign of the Son of Man will not tarry long in the heavens. He Himself comes on the clouds of heaven in great power and glory. The promise given by the two men at the time of the Lord's ascension is now to be fulfilled. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye see Him go into heaven." He ascended upon high; He predicted this event in uttering these words in the Olivet discourse.

And this too is found in the Old Testament prophetic Word. "I saw in the night visions and behold, one, like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven * * *" (Daniel vii:14). This takes place after the ten-horned beast with the little horn, with the eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things, had come forth. All this refers to the end of the Jewish age. The little horn is the same evil person seen elsewhere in prophecy. It is then and not before, when the little horn is in existence, that Daniel sees the Ancient of Days and the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven to receive the Kingdom. What a wonderful and divine unity the Scriptures are!

If we turn briefly to the Book of Revelation, we shall find once more a minute confirmation of these revealed events. It is the Book which in its greater part is taken up with the description of the tribulation, judgments and other events of the last week of Daniel; the seven years with which the age closes. Therefore in the very be-

ginning of the Book do we find a solemn announcement which fully harmonizes with the words before us here. "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen" (Rev. i:7). It needs no further comment to show how fully these words confirm both the Old Testament predictions and the predictions of our Lord. This striking harmony should not appear to us as so very wonderful, for He who speaks the words on the Mount of Olives is the same who spoke through the prophets and the last Book is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him."

For a fuller description of His Coming the reader will turn to Rev. xix:11-16.

Let us now turn to the next words. "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them." Angels appear now once more upon the scene. Throughout this present dispensation angels as the ministering spirits are not seen; that they do minister is certainly a fact. But as soon as He comes again, He who was made a little lower than the angels, and who is above the angels in Glory, they will be sent forth again. When he was born in Bethlehem they appeared with their heavenly song of praise; when He comes again the holy angels will accompany the Christ and His church and the angels will worship Him (Heb. i:16). It is also written "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-8). In Matthew xiii we likewise find that angels are mentioned in connection with

the end of the age, the same end as here. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and He shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity" (xiii:41). "So shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just" (xiii:49). In our passage the angels sound a trumpet and they go out to gather His elect from the four winds. We say once more that this has nothing to do with the church. The removal of the church takes place before the last week of Daniel's prophecy begins and when the Lord comes immediately after the days of tribulation, the church is with Him and in His Glory the church is manifested. He comes and brings His saints with Him. The revelation concerning His coming for the church is recorded in 1 Thess. iv:15-18. To make the elect in Matthew xxiv:30 the church, as it is done so often, is bewildering and a wrong interpretation. This part of the Olivet discourse, as we have shown, has nothing whatever to do with the church. The "Elect" in this chapter always means His elect earthly people, as stated before.

The angels will gather them back to the land and bring them in, for the people in greater part are still scattered in the corners of the earth, when the Son of Man, the King of Israel, returns. Of this the Old Testament bears witness. "And it shall come to pass in *that day*, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem" (Isaiah xxvii:13). "And it shall come to pass in *that day*, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros and from Cush, and from Shi-

nar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah xi:11, 12). "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. But the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall find them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks" (Jer. xvi:4-16). This regathering of the remnant of Israel, the people left after the great tribulation, takes place after the Lord has been manifested out of the heavens. Then the "lost tribes" will be discovered, and during the age of the Kingdom, God will fulfil in His regathered people, the nation Israel, all the precious promises His prophets spoke and which a false theory called "Anglo-Israelism" attempts to have realized in this present Christian age.

What follows now are exhortations and solemn warnings given by the Lord, and these form a sublime conclusion of this first part of the Olivet discourse, referring, as we have learned, to the end of the Jewish Age. We shall look briefly at each verse.

"But learn the parable from the figtree: When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh. Thus also ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors" (verses 32, 33). The figtree is the picture of Israel. The

parable of the figtree in Luke xiii is well known, and its application is Israel, to whom the Lord came, looking for fruit, and did not find it. Luke xxi, the record there of this discourse, mentions likewise the figtree and *all the trees;* these are the Gentiles, the nations. In Matthew xxi, we see in the withered figtree a type of Israel's spiritual and national death. But that withered tree is to be vitalized. The figtree will bud again. However, the characteristic of the figtree is that fruit and leaves are there together. As soon as the branch becomes tender the fruit is found. It is a rapid development. This is the lesson here. Israel's blessing, new life, fruit and glory will *quickly* be realized in those end days. When in these last seven years, and especially the last 1,260 days, all these things come to pass, they will know that all which is promised to Israel will be at hand. The other application, that *now* we behold Israel like a budding figtree, signs of new national life and in this a sign of the times, is certainly not wrong. It tells us of the nearness of the end.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but my Words shall in no wise pass away" (verses 34, 35).

The wrong interpretation of the word "generation" is responsible for the erroneous conception so prevalent in our days. It is said that "this generation" must mean the very generation, the people who lived then upon the earth, when the Lord spoke these words. It is easily seen how, if this is the meaning of "this generation," the events predicted by our Lord *must* have been fulfilled within the life-time of the people living then. What other event could be meant than the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70? Thus the wrong interpretation of

these two words, "this generation," has led the large numbers of Bible teachers and readers of this discourse astray. But let us get the right meaning of "generation," and all will be clear. The word *genea* means not necessarily the same persons living, but it has also the meaning of *race*. The English word "generation" has this meaning of "family or a race of a certain class of people." And so has the Greek. It is used in that sense in Luke xvi:8. "This generation" is the race sprung from Abraham, God's chosen earthly people. Well have they been called "the everlasting nation;" better still we could call them "the nation of destiny." God has kept this race, and is keeping them for the fulfilment of His own great, revealed purpose. The verse, however, has also the meaning that the people living, when the end of the Jewish age sets in, will behold its termination; it will all be accomplished in a small space of time. Yea heaven and earth may pass away but *His Words* will not pass away. How solemn this is! Here we read still the same great and mighty Words, which were hated by thousands of God's enemies in the past; words which have been attacked and denied. And still the old enemy of the written Word is at it, and through his chosen instruments (alas! many of them in the midst of the professing church) attacks and belittles these Words. They stand! They are as eternal and divine, as infallible and true, as He, the eternal Son of God, is from whose lips they came.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, but my Father alone" (verse 37).

This makes the matter still more solemn. That day and hour, which will usher in these mighty events, of which the Lord speaks in His discourse, culminating in His own personal and glorious manifestation, is unknown. In the Gospel of Mark the Holy Spirit adds,

"nor the Son." This addition is made in Mark because there our Lord is viewed as God's servant, and a servant "does not know what his master doeth." The Father knows the day and the hour, when all this is to come to pass. The beginning of it is liable to occur at any time. How foolish, then, to speculate on the possible time of our Lord's return—and the setting of years and days. It dishonors the Word and brings reproach upon Prophecy.

"But as the days of Noe, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day on which Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took all away; thus shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left; two women grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left. Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour your Lord comes" (verses 37-42).

The introduction here of Noah and the flood is in fullest accord with the entire chapter. Noah lived at the close of an age, and was saved with his house through a great judgment, and then became the beginning of a new age. That this is typical of the remnant of Israel living at the close of the Jewish age is well known. As Noahcic age closed with the deluge, so will the Jewish age close with judgment. The judgment came suddenly upon the ungodly generation of Noah's day; *thus* will it be when the Son of Man cometh. Two classes were living in Noah's day. The one who were unbelieving and these were swept away by the divine judgment. The other class was Noah and his house, and he and his own were left and not destroyed by the judgment. It will be so again in the coming of the Son of Man. The unbelievers will be *taken* away in the day of judgment and

wrath; the others will be *left* on the earth to receive and enjoy the blessings of the coming age and enter into the kingdom, which will then be established. It is the opposite meaning of "taken" and "left" when the Lord comes as the "Bridegroom" for His church. Then, too, some will be taken and others left. The true believers will be taken into glory, caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air; the unbelievers and mere professors will be left. Some deny that the word "taken" in our passage means a judicial taking away. The context, however, shows (the reference to Noah and the flood) that this must be the meaning. Surely those who were taken by the flood were not "received into glory."

And now once more His warning voice is heard.

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be dug through. Wherefore ye also, be ye ready, for in that hour ye think not the Son of Man comes" (verses 43, 44).

With these worhs of warning and exhortation to watch, our Lord closes the predictions relating to the end of the Jewish age. This warning will be understood and heeded by the Jewish remnant, to which it is addressed. They are to *watch* for the Son of Man; the church is to *wait* for her Lord.

With the next verse, the beginning of the first of three parables relating to His coming, a new part of the Olivet discourse begins. We will find this very clearly marked and shall prove next that this part, from chapter xxiv:45 to chapter xxv:30 refers no longer to the events which transpire on the earth during the end of the Jewish age, but to something altogether different.

The second part of the Olivet discourse begins with the 45th verse of this great chapter and extends to chap-

ter xxv:30. The contents of this division are entirely different from the preceding one. Up to the forty-fourth verse we learned that the Lord gives predictions relating to the end of the Jewish age, an end still to come. We traced all these predictions in the Old Testament and in the great book of prophecy in the New Testament, the Revelation. We found the closest correspondency between Matthew xxiv:3-44, certain parts of the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation, because all three deal with the same period of time. But now another series of predictions are before us which have no connection with Old Testament prophecy nor with Revelation vi:xix.

In the first part of this discourse we hear of wars, pestilence, famine, great tribulation, false Christs, the abomination of desolation, Judea, the Sabbath day and the visible and glorious coming of the Son of Man. The exhortations were to flee to the mountains, to pray that the flight take not place on the Sabbath day, to endure unto the end for salvation, etc. *Of all this we do not read a word in the second section* of our Lord's utterances. Here again he speaks in parables as He did in His second discourse in this Gospel, contained in chapter xiii. The three parables which make up this part of the Olivet discourse picture the condition of things during the absence of the King and how in the professing church, in Christendom, there will be the true and the false, possessors and professors, saved and unsaved, such who have life and such who have a name to live but are dead. These three parables then may be justly put alongside of the seven parables in chapter xiii dealing with the kingdom of heaven; the phrase the Lord uses again in giving the second parable. The great parables in the thirteenth chapter give the beginning, the external and internal development of Christendom, in a general way; the three

parables in the Olivet discourse give the moral aspect of those who are in the professing church, and each is linked with the fact of His coming again. His coming discerns the true and the false and brings the separation of the good from the bad.

Let us, however, understand clearly that we have in these parables not the full revelation of what is the blessed Hope for the Church. The Church is, as we have seen from our exposition, mentioned in this first Gospel and spoken of as being an institution of the future.

Not in the Gospels do we find full revelation about the church, her relationships, her calling, her heavenly hope and glorious destiny. All this is made known elsewhere in the New Testament. The parables concern the Christian profession in a general way. If we hold this fast in our minds we shall find no difficulties at all. This Christian age is a mixed age and will be so to the end and the Coming One will find the faithful and prudent servant and the evil servant; the wise virgins and the foolish; the faithful servants using their talents and the wicked and slothful servant. The Coming One will mete out the judgment. The faithful servant is called "Blessed," the evil servant is cut in two and cast out. The wise virgins go in with the bridegroom and the foolish face a shut door. The servants who used the talents are set over many things and the slothful servant is cast out into the outer darkness. That the Lord will first descend into the air (1 Thess. iv:15-18) and that the true believers, resurrected saints and living saints will be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air to appear then before the judgment seat of Christ; that the unsaved, nominal Christians will go into apostasy and after the great tribulation receive judgment when the Lord comes out of heaven

and all His saints with Him—all this is not revealed in these parables.

And now we turn to the first parable.

"Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in season? Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus. Verily, I say unto you, that he will set him over all his substance. But if that evil bondman should say in his heart, My lord delays to come, and begin to beat his fellow bondmen, and eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he does not expect it and in an hour he knows not of, and shall cut him in two and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verses 45-51).

The Lord still speaks to His disciples, but let us understand now while they are viewed in the first part as Jewish disciples and typical of the remnant of Israel in the end of the Jewish age, here the Lord looks upon them as soon to be in connection with something new, that is, Christianity. The parable itself is the simplest of all three; yet it has very significant and far-reaching lessons. The thought in this parable is service over the household; the household are those who are Christ's. This household is to receive food in season and the bondman or servant, faithful and prudent, is to supply the household with that food. He does it faithfully and at the coming of the Lord, this faithful and prudent bondman is set over all the substance of his lord. This is an extremely beautiful and blessed parable. It takes us at once upon an entirely new ground. Judaism knows nothing of that kind of ministry which is spoken of here; it is essentially Christian. The Lord, the great shepherd of His sheep, for whom He died, whom He loves so much,

appointed His own as bondmen of *Himself*, to feed His flock, to give them to eat. This is what pleases the Lord, and it is only another proof of how dear and beloved His own people are to Him. Faithfulness to Him and to His own, His household, is the teaching of these words. The true servant (and every true believer has a service) is faithful and prudent and attends to that, to which his Lord has called him. And what keeps in such service? What is it that makes it ever fresh and refreshing, sweet and precious? It is the Hope of His Coming, yea, His imminent coming. The next paragraph, the description of the evil servant with his evil watchword, will bring this more prominently to our view. The reward of the faithful and prudent servant is a higher service, a service over all the substance of His Lord. Service does not terminate with this earthly life; there is a service up yonder, for "His servants shall serve Him." Faithful service here fits for that higher service in His presence. According to our faithfulness in service here we shall find service there to the praise and glory of His Name.

But now the other side comes up. The Lord pictures an evil servant and he saith in his heart, "My lord delays his coming." He acts outrageously, smites his fellow servants and eats and drinks with the drunken; suddenly his lord comes and gives him his portion with the hypocrites.

The interpretation is easily made. Here is the spurious, that which has taken the name of Christ and claims to be a servant likewise. The person described is a hypocrite; he professes outwardly to be a servant under his lord, but in his heart he saith, "My lord delays his coming." Then he usurps the place of authority, instead of serving in meekness, feeding Christ's own, he domineers over fellow servants and associates with the drunken.

The faithful and prudent servant is a picture of how

it ought to be in the house, the church, and the evil servant in his hypocrisy and evil work is a picture of Christendom in corruption. The starting point of this corruption, this domineering over fellow servants and association with the drunken, the world, began with saying "my Lord delayeth his coming." It began in the heart. He gave up first in his heart that Hope, which was so pronounced in the early church. The belief given up that the Lord would come back, the departure from the doctrine of the imminency of the coming of the Lord, soon brought out the evils which the parable pictures. If the return of the Lord at any time had been the heart faith of the professing church, all the abominations of which the parable speaks would have been well nigh an impossibility. Gradually the belief in the coming of the Lord was given up; and as it was abandoned in the professing church, "the domineers of the people," the Nicolaitans sprung up; an earthly priesthood was inaugurated, fashioned after a priesthood, which was the shadow of the better things, fulfilled in Christ. This false priesthood took the place of authority and domineers over the others, the servants of Christ. The separation was likewise given up and the church became identified with the world. It is another glimpse of the mustard seed in chapter xiii becoming a great tree with the birds flocking into its branches. The evil servant and his deeds are more fully pictured in the church message to Pergamos in the book of Revelation. But let us pass lightly over the fact that the evil servant began by saying in his heart, "my lord delayeth his coming." He may not have been that evil servant all at once; but as soon as he said in his heart that the lord delays he had taken the first step towards becoming corrupt in doctrine and in practice. The enemy had put that foolish thought into his heart and then led him on into the wickedness he practiced.

And has this no meaning for us? Indeed it has. God's own Spirit through the Word has but a few years ago led back to the blessed Hope and the midnight cry has been heard, "Behold the bridegroom; go ye forth to meet Him." There has been a most powerful revival of the study of prophecy and the imminency of the coming of the Lord has been taught and believed with apostolic simplicity. It has led out and on into true service for Christ. One who believes in the imminent coming of the Lord cannot help himself from looking to that Lord of being responsible to Him for service and wait on Him for service. This has been the case. Of the large numbers of servants who have been used in preaching the Gospel and shepherding the flock of Christ, the great majority have been and are such "who wait for His Son from heaven." There is a remnant of faithful ones who expect Him to come, who wait for Him; this expectation leads to faithful and happy service. One can be very happy indeed in serving the Lord with the childlike but scriptural Hope "He *may* come to-day."

The enemy, however, is not satisfied with having God's people waiting for the Lord. He is the author of that evil cry, "my Lord delayeth his coming." And he has succeeded in producing it in these days of revival of the study of Prophecy. We know some who taught and believed the imminency of the coming of the Lord. All at once their voices were silent as to the blessed Hope. Why? In some way they became ensnared in teachings which put off the glorious event till after the great tribulation, the manifestation of the Antichrist, etc., and this unscriptural view silenced their testimony completely. It is sad to see this, and we fear, if our Lord tarries, some of these men (as it has been already the case) will act the part of the evil servant in a still more pronounced way.

Let us beware of any teaching which has even the faintest insinuation in it of the Lord delaying his coming. It is

not of God. Let us rather begin each day with the blessed expectation that He may come to-day and then go forth to serve and be faithful to Him. But be assured the enemy will not rest, but find some new and subtle way to take away the blessed Hope and the blessed expectation, and to try and bring us into conformity with the world. Only the power of God can keep us in these evil days in this simple path and that will rest upon us as we cling to Him, the Lord who comes.*

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*We take the following from a recent volume by W. Kelly:

"Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapors that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope; yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and its shade of desolation. They are mistakes of theorists. The one puts a wrong expectation between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that the church must go through so dreadful a crisis.

"Be assured, my brethren, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the great tribulation shall come, but not for the Christian. When it is a question about the Jew, you can undersand it well; for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry; yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshipped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing directly to do. The predicted trouble falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those that ought to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put into the sanctuary of God."

CHAPTER XXV.

The second parable is the parable of the ten virgins. It is one which is interpreted by students of the prophetic Word in different ways; we are therefore obliged to give it our closest attention.

"Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins that, having taken their lamps, went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were prudent and five foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and did not take oil with them; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept. But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the prudent answered, saying: We cannot, lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell and buy for yourselves. But as they went away to buy the bridegroom came, and the ones that were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the rest of the virgins, saying Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answering, said, Verily I say unto you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." (Verses 1-13.)

We have already shown that these parables have nothing more to do with the Jewish age and the remnant of His earthly people, which stands out so prominently in the first part of this discourse. However, as there is an increasing

tendency among teachers of Prophecy to apply this parable of the virgins in a Jewish way, putting its fulfillment in the time of the great tribulation, we will be obliged to look at this view first and show that it is incorrect. After we have done this we shall be able to better grasp the meaning of this great parable and its teaching. The theory advanced is the following:

The Lord begins His parable with the word "then". This word proves that the parable refers to the time of the end of the Jewish age for that is described in the preceding chapter. Then—when?—when there is a time of trouble and the Lord is about to come. The parable is therefore applied by some teachers as referring to the condition of things on the earth at the close of the great tribulation. "Then" at that time when He returns after the great tribulation, shall the kingdom of the heavens be like ten virgins. It is furthermore claimed that the ten virgins do not represent the church, as the Bride of Christ. That the Bride is already with the Bridegroom and as the virgins are not the Bride, but go forth to meet th Bridegroom who comes with the Bride to the wedding feast, the parable could not be applied to present conditions; the Bride, the church, must be first with the Bridegroom, before the virgins can go out to meet Him.

Another fact is used to strengthen this exposition. Some of the oldest versions have additional three words in the first verse, so that it reads: "Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like ten virgins that having their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom *and the bride.*" The words are found in the Syriac version and also in the Vulgate. This is generally taken to be the conclusive evidence that the parable falls in its fulfillment in the close of the great tribulation and that the five prudent virgins are the Jewish remnant.

And now we challenge this exposition as being incorrect and contrary to Scripture. Let us look at the arguments against it.

The use of the word "then" proves the very opposite from what it is made to prove. "Then," this little word, has always a great significance in Prophecy. Now if the parable of the ten virgins would come in at the close of the forty-fourth verse in chapter xxiv, the parable could mean absolutely nothing else but an event which is connected with the end of the geat tribulation. We learned that the forty-fourth verse in the preceding chapter marked the close of the part of the discourse in which the Lord speaks of the signs of His coming and the end of the age. If we were to read in the forty-fifth verse, "Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins, etc.," there would be no other way but to connect the parable with the mighty events which the Lord had just described. It would have the same application as the "then" in verse forty. "Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left." But will the reader notice as we have shown before, that with the forty-fifth verse the Lord introduces an entirely different theme; it is no longer the Jewish end of the age, the Jewish remnant, their suffering and deliverance, no longer His visible manifestation out of the heavens, but it is teaching in parables concerning this present Christian age, the Christian profession. One parable He had spoken, the parable of the faithful and the evil servant. How perfectly it applies to Christian conditions in this age, the true and the false, we have seen in our exposition. The "then" with which the second parable begins is to be brought in connection with the first parable; it refers to the same period of time when in the professing sphere of Christendom there is a faithful servant and an evil servant, and not to the end of the Jewish age.

A brief word on the question of the virgins representing the Jewish remnant and the apostate part of the nation (in the foolish virgins) is in order. We read in the parable of the ten virgins going to sleep because the bridegroom tarried. It is generally conceded that the going to sleep happened on account of the long delay of the bridegroom and that the virgins watched no longer for his coming. It is impossible to apply this to the condition of things during the great tribulation. It is all out of the question to think of the remnant, if that remnant is represented by the wise virgins, as going to sleep, when that remnant, as we learned from Chapter xxiv will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and herald the coming of the King. This one argument is sufficient to completely answer this mode of interpretation. Furthermore the remnant is not called out to go forth to meet the bridegroom. The virgins are such who are called out to go forth. The remnant is the opposite. The prudent virgins have the oil, which is a type of the Holy Spirit; they have the supply of the Holy Spirit, which could hardly be applied to the Jews before the visible return of the Lord.

And what about the reading of some of the old versions? There is not sufficient evidence that it is genuine. The evidences against it are two-fold. The teaching that the church is the bride of Christ is a subsequent revelation. We cannot look for it here, and in the second place it is opposed to the meaning of the parable itself. This parable relates to the coming of the Bridegroom and that is why there is no need of mentioning the Bride. With this we dismiss this theory that the parable is one which refers to the Jews during the tribulation.

Before we turn to the exposition of the parable itself we want to mention another wrong interpretation which likewise is gaining ground in these days. It is taught that the

five prudent virgins with the oil are such who have received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, who have attained to a high standard of holiness, who are fully surrendered and are virgins indeed, separated from the world in the highest sense. The foolish virgins are Christians too, but lack the "higher life," a phrase as unscriptural as "the second blessing." Such teaching is not alone confusing but it aims finally at the Grace of God and the blessed work of our Lord.* We do well to beware of anything which magnifies the attainments of man and thereby obscures Grace. No, the wise virgins do not represent the select company called by some "the First Fruits," who are filled with the Spirit and are taken to be with the Lord while the foolish are "only justified believers" who have to go through the tribulation. The foolish virgins could not represent real Christians for the Lord tells them "*I know you not.*"

And now before we look at the parable, which is simple indeed, we wish to remind the reader again, that it is not necessary that everything in a parable be applied in some way. A parable is an allegorical representation illustrating some great principle. This parable shows under the picture of the ten virgins the Christian profession, the true and the false again and yet in profession alike in having gone out to meet the Bridegroom.

It must be looked upon as referring first of all to the beginning of this Christian age. The Christian church started out so to speak with this two-fold attitude, separation from the world and in expectation of the Coming of the Bridegroom.

The teaching of Christianity is that such who accept the name of Christian are to go out and separate from the old

*Quite often Pslam xlv is used in teaching the difference of the Bride and the virgins. However, that Psalm refers to Israel and the nations.

and go forth with the purpose to meet the Bridegroom. It was so in the beginning. The Jews had to go forth from the camp and the Gentiles had to turn to God from their idols; all waited for His Son from heaven that blessed Hope, which was so lively in the very start of Christianity. The name "virgin" conveys the same thought of separation. The lamps which they had tell us of another Christian characteristic; he is called to give light. The first verse of the parable gives us in a few words that which is characteristic of the Christian calling and which was so marked in the beginning. Going forth, that is separation from the world, going forth with lamps, to give light and shine and going forth to meet the Bridegroom, who promised to come again. Separation, manifestation and expectation is that in which Christianity consists.

In the next place we read that half of the virgins representing the Christian profession were foolish. Their foolishness consisted in taking their lamps, but they took no oil. However, their condition is fully discovered and demonstrated after the midnight cry. The other five were wise and they took oil in their vessels with their lamps. What these lamps and vessels were is best explained by Edersheim. He says: "The lamps consisted of round receptacles for pitch or oil for the wick. This was placed in a hollow cup or deep saucer, which was fastened by a pointed end into a long wooden pole, in which it was borne aloft."

That we have in the division of the ten virgins, into five foolish and five wise, the false and the true is obvious enough. The five foolish virgins are representing such who are only professing Christians, while the five wise are possessing Christians, true believers. But it may be said, did not the foolish virgins go forth to meet the Bridegroom? In their *profession* they certainly did, but that does not make

them really saved persons. Everything later shows that they were unsaved and all their profession was simply empty. They are the representatives of such who have the form of godliness (the lamps) but who deny the power thereof, who lack the power to give out light (the oil). And here again is an objection. Did they not later say "give us of your oil for our lamps are going out?" Then they must have had some oil else how could they say that the lamps were going out? There is no proof at all in this that they possessed oil. In the first place, it says in the beginning, "they took no oil"; this in itself should settle this question. In their alarm, however, when the cry of the coming of the Bridegroom was heard they made an effort to have shining lamps. Who does not know that a wick may be set burning without oil to give forth a puff of smoke and then to go out? This was the case with the foolish virgins. They never had oil as the great masses of professing Christians in these days have lamps, the form outwardly, but they have never accepted Christ in the heart, and therefore the oil, the Holy Spirit and His power, is lacking. A fearful condition it is! Alas! the innumerable thousands and hundreds of thousands who are in this condition to-day! The wise virgins represent the true believers, who not alone have lamps, but oil in their lamps with their vessels. The Holy Spirit is present with every true child of God, though he be the weakest and the least taught.

And now we read of the tarrying of the bridegroom and that both, the foolish and the wise, grew heavy and slept. This has been interpreted in different ways, but only one interpretation can be made. The bridegroom tarrying long they did no longer expect him and were overcome by sleep. In the beginning of the Christian church they all expected the coming of the Lord, but as

years went on they gave up the blessed Hope and ceased looking for the Lord. The sleeping of the virgins stands for this fact that the expectancy of the coming of the Lord was given up. Occasionally during the centuries when the professing church had gone into corruption, there was an alarm of the coming judgment day. It was so in the beginning of the seventh century and about the year 1000. But it was not a going forth again to meet the bridegroom with joy, but rather the opposite, an expectation of judgment and the end of the world. The priests then made use of the opportunity and the poor frightened people expecting the end of the world handed over their treasures to the "church." Aside from these alarms of the end of the world the sleep continued, and instead of waiting for the Bridegroom, going forth to meet Him, the professing church, the foolish and the wise, became occupied with earthly things, earthly power and government and the conversion of the world. Here in this verse we note a second period in the history of Christendom, the period in which the return of the Lord is not expected; they all slept.

But now comes a third period. "But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold the Bridegroom, go ye forth to meet Him." The question is, has this period been reached or are we to wait for a startling cry of this nature, awaking the foolish and the wise, the professors and the possessors? Some teach that this midnight cry refers to the shout of the Lord when He comes into the air (1 Thess. iv:13-18). Dear readers, we are living in the very time of the fulfillment of this verse and are facing the soon coming of the Bridegroom. The midnight cry has been heard toward the middle of the last century, when the Holy Spirit through mighty instruments, though humble, gave a revival of the blessed Hope and all that which

is connected with it. And this cry is still heard, "Behold the Bridegroom! ge ye forth to meet Him." The enemy would silence this blessed word, but he cannot do it. But notice it is not alone the announcement of the fact of the coming of the Bridegroom, but it is more than that. The right reading is to leave out the word "cometh" in the authorized version and read simply, "Behold the Bridegroom!" The blessed Hope of His coming does not so much put the coming before our hearts as it does Himself. And as we behold the Bridegroom and know He is soon coming, how can we help ourselves but to go forth to meet Him. That means then a return to the true Christian calling, which is separation from the world, separation from all which is false and unscriptural, which dishonors Him. His person, His Work or His Word. And this has been exactly the case. The midnight cry has awakened the true believers to a return to the true position and led on to a separation from that which is evil. It is so still. There is of course a preaching and teaching of Prophecy which does not touch the conscience, which is only for the head. Men teach correctly all about the 70 year weeks in Daniel, the restoration of the Jews and the millennium, and they go on in their evil ways. This is an evil thing. May the Lord keep us from it. The midnight cry is given that we may go forth to meet Him and be truly separated unto Him, who is soon coming. And if we have heard that cry by the power of the Spirit of God and are gone forth to meet the Bridegroom, we have a responsibility to take it up and sound it forth. And now what happens next? "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out. But the prudent answered saying, We cannot lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell and buy for yourselves. But as

they went away the Bridegroom came, and the ones that were ready went in with Him to the wedding feast and the door was shut."

The midnight cry discovers the true condition of the foolish and the wise. The foolish without oil running hither and thither, the prudent calm, arising, trimming their lamps, ready for the Bridegroom. It is a most significant fact that the blessed Hope of the coming of the Bridegroom, the midnight cry, is causing a separation between the true and the false. Those who are the Lord's and have the oil seem to be attracted to Himself and love His appearing, while the others, the mere professors, are behaving as foolishly as the foolish virgins in the parable. We can do no better than quote from the writings of one of the earnest and devoted men, who were used under God, to have a part in giving the midnight cry. "Awestricken come the foolish virgins to the wise saying, 'Give us of your oil,' but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them, 'Go buy oil for yourselves.' There is one who sells, but freely, without money and without price, to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope, as it had the effect also of recalling the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the wise as alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish; who but one could give what they wanted. What is the meaning of all the recent agitation? People zealous for religious forms, who know not really of Christianity. The foolish virgins are in quest of the oil, leaving no stone unturned to get what they have not, the one thing needful—taking every way except the right. The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the fantastical costumes of clergymen, the modern taste for church music, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in fit state to meet the Lord and fear it themselves. They are troubled with

the rumor of they know not what. The consequence then of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, and are wise by His Grace to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly are none the less powerfully, but in their own way affected by the cry and its effects, which rise not above nature and the earth." Utterly ignorant of the Grace of God, they are trying to make up by what is called "earnestness." They know not that they are far from God, yea, dead in trespasses and sins. So they think or hope, that being "earnest they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion can be more hopeless?"

And what else might be added to this? Religious activities, societies, endeavors and other things are constantly multiplying and one can see readily in much of this the running about of the foolish virgins. None could take from the parable however that when the midnight cry is heard that an individual who discovers that he has no oil, that he is not the Lord's, could not come to Him, who is ready to sell without money and without price. Blessed be His Name, He stands ready to the very last moment to give the oil, fulfilling to the last moment while He tarrieth His own gracious word, "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The trouble however with the foolish virgins is they do not want to come to HIM to buy of Him, but rather go on in their own natural, foolish way.

And now comes the last stage of this parable. The Bridegroom comes. The prudent enter in, the foolish are shut out. The door was shut. Oh, solemn, solemn word! The door was shut! How soon all this may be a reality. The midnight brought the cry; now we are facing the dawn of the morning. We are in the fourth watch. Soon He will come and *all* who are saved by Grace, though they may be ignorant of His premillennial coming, or sadly lacking in

other respects, will go in to the wedding feast. All others, who are not saved, will be shut out. It is a final judgment. They can *never* enter in. "I know you not," is all they hear. "Watch therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour." *Reader! Are you ready?*

And now we come to the third parable. This parable concludes the second part of the Olivet discourse. "For it is as if a man going away out of a country called his bondsmen and delivered to them his substance. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his particular ability, and immediately went away out of the country. And he that had received the five talents went and trafficked with them, and made five other talents. In like manner also he that had received the two, he also gained two others. But he that had received the one went and dug in the earth and hid the money of his lord. After a long time the lord of those bondmen comes and reckons with them. And he that had received the five talents came to him and brought five other talents, saying, My lord, thou deliveredst me five talents; behold I have gained five other talents besides them. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman; thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came to him and said, My lord, thou deliveredst me two talents; behold I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent coming to him said, My lord, I know thee that thou are at hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering from where thou hadst not scattered, and being afraid I went away and hid thy talent in the earth; behold thou hast that which is thine.

And his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I had not sowed, and gathered from where I had not scattered; thou oughtest then to have put my money to the money changers, and when I came I should have got what is mine with interest. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that has the ten talents; for to every one that has shall be given, and he shall be in abundance; but from him that has not, that even which he has shall be taken from him. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (verses 14-30).

This parable is not identical with the one which is recorded in the Gospel of Luke (chapter xix:12-27). The one in Luke, the parable of the ten pounds, was uttered before the last visit to Jerusalem; the one here in Matthew when His visit was almost ended. The parable in Luke has more to do with the rewards in the Kingdom and has its special application into which we do not enter here. The parable here, following that of the ten virgins, shows us the same period of time, when the Lord is not present. We see in it again the responsibility which man has, in possession of the gifts which the absent Lord has bestowed and how the gifts may either be used or not used and that when He comes again the good and faithful servant will have an abundant entrance into the joy of His Lord, while the unprofitable servant is cast out.

The difficulty in this parable seems to have always been the servant who received the one talent. The teaching which is often, or rather generally given from his case, is one which is positively unscriptural. It is taught that he, as a believer and servant of Christ, did not make use of his talent and that all Christian believers who act in the same way, must share his fate. Upon this conception, believers

are exhorted to faithfulness, to be diligent and use that which the Lord has given to them, in case they do not, they will surely be cast out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. According to this teaching final salvation depends not upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, but upon the faithfulness of the believer and upon the use of what he has received. How this thought can be enlarged is easily seen. Some say, indeed, that every human being has some talent, even if it is a very small one, some light, something good, and if it is used, improved, that little good developed, it will result in salvation. That all such teaching is wicked and strikes at the very fundamentals of the blessed Gospel, is seen at the first glance. How can we reconcile the teaching of the Gospel of Grace with the case of the unprofitable servant in this parable? There is no need of attempting to reconcile it, for the one who had received the one talent and who hid it does not represent a true believer at all. To verify this we only need to hear what he has to say, what excuse he gives for having put away the talent. His words discover his true condition. He was far from being a true servant with a heart full of confidence and love. He is the very opposite. He did not trust the Lord at all, and with his words he accuses the Lord of being a hard master. Surely a true believer could never say such words about his gracious Lord. That he did not use the talent at all and then upon his idleness accuses the Lord unjustly is proof enough that the man represents a mere professing servant. *What the Lord had put at his disposal he had refused by not using it.*

The whole parable, aside from the case of the unprofitable servant, is not difficult to understand. We must, however, be careful to avoid the thought that the talents, the five talents and the two talents, are things like earthly posses-

sions, mental faculties, such as a good memory, a keen, logical mind, or a robust body. That all these are blessings and gifts of God none would doubt. The talents are His goods and delivered into the hands of the servants when He went away. However natural endowments are considered in the distribution of the gifts. To each is given "according to his particular ability." His own divine wisdom manifests itself in the bestowal of these talents. There is no true servant of Christ who is left without a gift. The absent Lord has given to each according to their ability.

Another great principle which this parable teaches is that the gift can be enlarged and increased. The two trafficked with the talents and doubled them. Exercise of any gift, no matter how small it is, will increase that gift and there will be gain, which of necessity is gain first of all for the Lord Himself. It will be for Him, as these servants laid before Him what they had received and what they had gained.

However, the distinction between the parable of the prudent servant and the evil servant at the close of chapter xxiv must also be maintained. The sphere of the prudent servant was narrower. He had to give meat in season to the household. The talents here are to be used in a wider sphere. Just as the merchant who trafficks and wishes to gain goes outside, the servant of Christ is to use that the Lord has given to him according to his natural ability and as he uses it, whether it is the preaching of the Gospel or labor among God's people, it will increase.

And then the Coming of the Lord and how He dealt with the good and faithful servants brings out another principle. Each receives a reward. To each the Lord saith, "Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He does not speak a higher and better

word of approval to the one who had the five talents and brought him five other talents. Both hear the same word of approval. It is therefore not the question of how much we have received of the Lord, but how we *use* that which He has given to us. Faithful service, even in the smallest matter, though there be but one talent, will bring approval.

To fully understand "the setting over many things," and what it is "to enter into the joy of the Lord" we shall have to wait until we stand in His own glorious presence and see Him face to face.

May this parable, like the preceding ones, urge us on as true believers to be faithful to the Lord. Soon He will come. Soon we shall appear before His judgment seat to give an account. May we all use what He has given and use it with confidence in Him and with Love for Him.

In the closing verses of this chapter (v. 31-46), we find the third part of the great prophetic discourse of our Lord. It relates to the Gentiles. Quite often this part is spoken of by expositors as a parable, just as some call the description of the future state of Dives and Lazarus in Luke xvi, a parable. But neither is a parable. Both are solemn descriptions of events and conditions which are real.

The King here gives us the picture of a great judgment, which He Himself conducts while He occupies the throne of His glory.

"But when the Son of man comes, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon His throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before Him; and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left" (v. 31-33).

It is evident that these words must be connected with chapter xxiv:30, 31. The scene takes place after His visible and glorious appearing as Son of Man and after His elect

(the remnant of His earthly people; that is, the "all Israel") have been gathered. Leaving out the central portion of the discourse, the three parables, relating to the Christian profession, we have in chapter xxiv:3-41 and chapter xxv:31-46 chronological events relating to the end of the Jewish age and the judgment which follows immediately after the Lord has come.

And will He occupy a literal throne? Some take it as being only a picture. But such a conception is totally wrong and dangerous. The angels will also appear with Him and will be seen by the inhabiters of the earth; what reason could be given that the throne, which He occupies, is a spiritual throne? No, the throne will be a literal throne, and it will be "His throne of Glory." To this same throne He referred when He answered Peter in chapter xix:28, "And Jesus said to them, Verily I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit down upon His throne of Glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The "Regeneration," the "*Paligenesia,*" of the coming age, begins with His second visible coming, and the first great event which takes place after He has sat down upon His own throne will be the judgment, as described by Himself in this part of the discourse.

The church is not seen here in Matthew. He will bring His own with Him and the church will take part in the scene pictured here as well as in the government of the earth and the universe. "Do ye not know that the Saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi:2). The angels will have their definite work in this judgment scene (Matt. xiii:41-42). The question which arises now is who the persons are, who will be judged. What judgment is it, which the Lord here describes? There should be little difficulty in ascertaining this and the person who closely adheres to the text, without

consulting the traditional views of the professing church will see at a glance who will be judged. The Lord says "*all nations*" will be gathered before Him. The persons judged must therefore be the nations, which are living in the day when the Lord appears in His Glory.

This excludes at once the true church. The church is with Him. No such judgment can be for the true church. The judgment seat of Christ (not of the Son of man) before which all true believers have to appear, either for approval or disapproval, is when this judgment of the nations takes place, a thing of the past. The judgment seat of Christ, before which believers have to appear, is not upon the earth, but in the air, in the place to which the church had been caught up.

Generally the great scene our Lord unfolds here of this judgment of the living nations is applied to a universal judgment. Such a judgment in which Jews, Christians, saved and unsaved, every member of the human race, all the heathen will participate is often preached from this passage, and another judgment scene, which is recorded in Rev. xx:11-15 is strangely identified with this one. We say at once there is not a line of Scripture which teaches such a universal judgment and no line of Scripture which teaches a universal resurrection, which is also taught by those who teach a general judgment. We repeat, a general judgment and a general resurrection is nowhere taught in the Word of God. However, we do not want our readers to think that we deny judgment and resurrection. We fully believe that every person who ever lived will be judged at some time, and every person who lived on this earth and died will be raised from the dead; but there are different judgments and two distinct resurrections.

If we turn to Rev. xx:11-15, the passage which is so often quoted with Matt. xxv:31-46, we find it totally dif-

ferent from the judgment scene which our Lord describes here in His Olivet discourse. In Rev. xx we do not behold a throne of Glory upon which the Son of Man sitteth, but it is a great white throne. Nor does that great white throne stand upon the earth as in Matt. xxv, but the earth and heaven fled away and there was no place found for them. The subjects of the great white throne judgment are not living nations, but "*the dead.*" As the context shows the nations, which were rebellious at the end of the thousand years were devoured by the fire from God out of heaven (verse 9). The great white throne judgment is that of the wicked dead and their eternal abiding place will be the lake of fire. This is the second resurrection or the resurrection of the unjust as our Lord calls it in John v.

There is a first resurrection in which all the saved have a share, which begins when the Lord comes for His Saints, and the dead in Christ rise first and we which are alive are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv:15-17). To this first resurrection belong likewise the martyrs during the great tribulation. All this is made clear by a few verses in the 20th chapter of Revelation. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (Rev. xx:4, 5). This proves clearly that there are two resurrections, one of the just and the other of the unjust, and they occur not at the same time, but there is a space of a thousand years between them.

Again let us remember that it is said of all such who

have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that they *have* everlasting lift and shall *not* come into judgment. For the true believer there is no judgment, because the Lord Jesus passed on the cross through the judgment as his substitute. The judgment seat of Christ of which we read in 1 Cor. v and before which all have to appear who are Christ's, concerns works, service, rewards, etc., and not an eternal destiny.

In our passage here an entirely different judgment is described. Not a word or a hint is given about resurrection; in fact, there is no resurrection at all in connection with the event pictured by the Lord. When He comes in His Glory, His church with Him, attended by the holy angels, He finds upon the earth His own earthly people Israel. The Israel which is left and passed through the fire and great tribulation has received Him as Redeemer and King and He turned ungodliness from Jacob. But He also finds living nations on the earth and these nations will be separated by the Son of Man sitting upon the throne of His glory. They will be parted by Him and the sheep put at His right hand and the goats at His left.

The place of the judgment of these living nations will no doubt be the land of Israel.

Zech. xiv:1-5 and Joel iii throws light upon this judgment scene. Let us then bear this clearly in mind. Matt. xxv:-31-46 describes a judgment, which takes place immediately after the Lord's second coming in power and in glory. The persons concerned in it are not Jews, nor the church, nor the dead, but the nations which are living in that day. And now after the separation has taken place the King speaks: "Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, Come blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation; for I hungered and you gave me to eat; I thirsted and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger

and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was ill and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came to me. Then shall the righteous answer Him saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungering, and nourished Thee; or thirsting and gave Thee to drink? and when saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in; or naked and clothed Thee? and when saw we Thee ill or in prison and came to Thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Verily, I say to you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me. Then shall He also say to those on the left, Go from me cursed into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I hungered, and ye gave me not to eat; thirsted and ye gave me not to drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye did not clothe me; ill and in prison and ye did not visit me. Then shall they also answer saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger or naked, or ill, or in prison, and have not ministered to Thee? Then shall He answer them saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it to one of these least, neither have ye done it to me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into eternal life."

And now in the first place, Who are the nations who are righteous and who figure here as sheep? That they do not represent the church and are not church saints, members of the one body, we have already demonstrated. It can easily be proven from the text itself. The righteous nations are called "the blessed of the Father," believers who constitute the church are more than blessed of the Father, they are in fellowship with the Father and the Son. These nations inherit a kingdom which is prepared from the foundation of the world. The inheritance of the church is higher than that. Our inheritance is with Himself. We are the joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore of the

church it is said that God has chosen us in Him "before the foundation of the world." Other proofs that these nations do not represent the church we pass by.

These nations are saved nations and their acts of righteousness are given here. They were merciful to the least of the King's brethren; they fed them, gave them to drink, clothed them and visited them. What they did to the Brethren of the King, they did unto Him.

How great the confusion is among Christians on the meaning of these words! Often the interpretation given strikes at the very fundamentals of the Gospel. Generally charitable acts, such as hospitals and prison work, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked in connection with church work or philanthropic institutions, are thought to be meant by our Lord.

If any one does these things and is faithful in them the King will approve of them in the judgment and many a soul builds upon this foundation of sand. All this is absolutely wrong. The works have an entirely different meaning.

Who are the Brethren of the King whom these righteous nations treated with such kindness and mercy? They are the brethren of the Lord according to the flesh, in other words they are Jews. If this is grasped, the whole judgment, the righteousness of the nations at the King's right hand and the unrighteousness of the others, the goats, will be clear.

Let the reader turn back to the first part of this discourse. There we read, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." What the Gospel of the Kingdom is, when this Gospel is to be preached (during the great tribulation), who is going to preach this last great witness we have shown at length in our exposition of the preceding chapter. The preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom

among all nations takes place during the end of the age. Up to this time this Gospel is not yet preached. The preachers of this Gospel during the ending years of the Jewish age will be the Jewish remnant. These are "Brethren" of our Lord according to the flesh. They will move among the nations of the world and give their startling witness in the proclamation of that Gospel, which will herald the nearness of the coming of the King and the Kingdom. How will they be received among the nations? Will their testimony be universally believed or will it be rejected? The words of our Lord here at the close of the discourse give us the answer.

Some of the nations will receive their testimony. They believe the Gospel of the Kingdom, this last great witness. They manifest the genuineness of their faith by works. The preachers who are going about are prosecuted and hated by others, suffering, hungry, and some cast into prison. These nations who believe their testimony show their faith by giving them to eat, clothing them, visiting them in prison, and by showing love to them. The case of Rahab may be looked upon as a typical foreshadowing. She believed. It was at a time when the judgment was gathering over Jericho (the type of the world). "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." And again it is written of her, "Likewise also was Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" She had faith and manifested it by works. And so these nations believe the messengers and treat them in kindness. Grace thus covers them because they believed.

They enter into the Kingdom and inherit the same; as righteous they go into eternal life. In other words, they remain throughout the kingdom age on the earth and pass

on into the eternal state. That they will occupy with saved Israel a special position in the Kingdom we fully believe; nor can they share the revolt which takes place after the thousand years, when Satan is loosed for a little while.

The question may arise who these nations are, who will receive the Gospel of the Kingdom. This can hardly be answered now. One thing seems certain that the nations which heard the Gospel of Grace preached, who had a chance to believe *will not have another chance** to accept the Gospel of the Kingdom.

And now the other side. There are nations in the presence of that throne of Glory who will be put at the left side of the King. The messengers came to them and they refused to believe their message and because they did not believe they did not treat the messengers in kindness and mercy. These nations continued in wickedness and unbelief; they rejected the last offer, and now their eternal destiny is to be forever settled. The King says unto them, "Go from Me, cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." At the close the Lord says, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment." How solemn are these words! Awful words! Go from Me! And where to? Into eternal fire. He does not say "Cursed of my Father," but simply "Cursed." The Father does not "Curse;" He does not want any one to be in the place of eternal distance and darkness. Nor is the place, the eternal fire, prepared for these nations, but it is prepared for the devil and his angels. By rejecting God's love and mercy, by continuing in unbelief they sided with the devil and his angels and now there is no other remedy for them but to share for all eternity the place prepared for the devil and

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*We are sorry to find this unscriptural theory of a second chance spreading in our day among many good people. Beware of it!

his angels. At the close of the thousand years the devil is put into the lake of fire (Rev. xx:10). Previously the beast and the false prophet were cast into that place before the millennium (Rev. xix:20). The order of punishment then is the following: 1. The beast and the false prophet. 2. The unrighteous nations. These go there before the millennial kingdom. 3. The devil with his angels. 4. The wicked dead from the great white throne judgment. This takes place after the thousand years. Oh! the folly which tries to explain away the eternity of punishment of the wicked. Yet this is done in our present day as never before. God is too good, too merciful to do that; and others claim that while there is punishment, it is not eternal, but only age abiding. All these fanciful, philosophical theories, so popular in our day, are completely answered by the solemn words of our Lord, "And these shall go away into *ETERNAL* punishment, and the righteous into *ETERNAL* life."

Thus ends the last great discourse of the King in this Gospel and ere long all that which He predicted, sitting upon the Mount of Olives, will be reality. Reader! Let us live in the light of these solemn truths.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The great last discourse of the King being ended there remains now nothing else to record than the story of His passion, His suffering, death and resurrection. This is the record of the remaining three chapters of the first Gospel. Two of these are the longest in the whole book. He had foretold in His great prophecy in the Olivet discourse the future of the Jews, the Christian profession and the future of the nations. Now He is to go and fulfill all the predictions concerning His sufferings and death, as written in Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. The twenty-sixth chapter, which we shall follow briefly, is one of contrasts. Here we behold Him in all His wonderful perfection again. With what calmness and dignity He enters upon that great work, which the Father gave Him to do. On the other hand we see wickedness and Satanic powers revealed which now cast themselves in all their fury upon the holy One. What a wonderful story it is which we have followed in this first Gospel. How marvelous the events and how perfect and divine the entire arrangement! Man could never have written such an account.

This chapter tells us of seven events, which we hope to follow in their order. These are the following: 1.—The last prediction of His suffering and death (verses 1-5). 2.—His anointing in the house of Simon, the leper, in Bethany (verses 6-13). 3.—Judas betrays Him for thirty pieces of silver (verses 14-16). 4.—The account of the passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper (verses

17-35). 5.—The agony in the garden of Gethsemane (verses 36-46). 6.—His capture and the accusations and sufferings before Caiaphas, the high priest (verses 47-68). 7.—The denial of Peter (69-75).

"And it came to pass when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, Ye know that after two days the Passover takes place and the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together to the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and took counsel together, in order that they might seize Jesus by subtlety and kill Him; but they said, Not in the feast, that there be not a tumult among the people" (verses 1-5).

We notice first of all the last prediction of His death. This is the fourth time He predicts His death in this Gospel. He not only predicts the manner of His death, but now also the time; He is to be crucified at the time of the Passover. All this manifests His Deity. He knew all beforehand. Let none think that all that which was before Him dawned upon Him gradually; He knew every one of the sufferings and all that which was now to come upon His holy head. But what calmness breathes in these words, in which He predicted His coming crucifixion! There is no anxiety, no concern about anything, but to do the will of Him that sent Him and to give Himself as the true passover Lamb.

No sooner is this announcement made and heard from His lips then the enemy becomes also busy. He would hinder this divine purpose that the great sacrifice should be brought at the predicted time. If he could not keep Him from going to the cross, he would attempt, at least, to mar the fullest meaning of that death. The chief priests and the elders are now together in counsel. The men who have appeared so often upon the scene of this Gospel ap-

pear once more, and through them the enemy utters his advice "not in the feast." But this much is decided, the King, the Prince of Life, is to be killed. They must get rid of Him, and so wicked hands are getting ready to crucify and to slay Him, as later the Holy Spirit declared "Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." All the wickedness, hatred of man and the sinfulness of sin, as well as Satanic power, is now to be revealed in the sufferings of Christ. And here He is the perfect One in perfect love and obedience, to do the Father's will, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

And now the second scene. It takes place in the house of Simon, the leper, most likely called by that name because he had been afflicted with leprosy. The beautiful incident, full of precious lessons, is followed by the murmuring of the disciples, especially from the side of Judas, as we learn from the Gospel of John.

"But Jesus being in Bethany, in Simon, the leper's house, a woman having an alabaster flask of very precious ointment, came to Him and poured it out upon His head as he lay at table. But the disciples seeing it became indignant, saying, To what end was this waste? for this might have been sold for much and been given to the poor. But Jesus knowing it said to them, Why do ye trouble the woman? for she has wrought a good work toward me. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. For in pouring out this ointment on my body, she has done it for my burial. Verily I say to you, Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (verses 6-13).

The woman who did this blessed work for the Lord is not named here. From the Gospel of John we learn that it was none other than Mary, the sister of Martha. To fully under-

stand the scene here the account in the Gospel of John must be taken in consideration (Chapter xii). There we read the details of the feast which was made for Him in the house and that Lazarus was also present. How devoted Mary was to her Lord. We first see her at His feet listening to His words. "One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part," He had said then. She had acknowledged Him in His office as Prophet. In John xi we see her again at His feet. There she is weeping on account of the death of Lazarus; a little while later He weeps with her. She knew Him as the sympathizing One, as He is now our Priest. And here she anoints Him, and does it for His burying. In faith she realizes the near approach of that death, of which He had spoken. She believed He, the Lamb of God, would soon die; she understood more of that death than all the other disciples. Perhaps when she sat at His feet He had spoken to her about His coming death and burial and resurrection. But some readers of the Bible have a difficulty. Here in our Gospel she anoints His head, but in the Gospel of John she is at His feet and anoints them, wiping His feet with her hair. Critics and infidels who deny the inspiration of the Bible have pointed this out as one of the glaring contradictions, while others have thought of two different occasions when the anointing took place. There is, however, no difficulty here at all. She anointed both His feet and His head. The Holy Spirit reports the anointing of the head of the Lord in Matthew, because this is in harmony with the object of the Gospel. He is the King, and while He is the rejected King, her faith no doubt looked beyond death and burial. In John the Holy Spirit gives the anointing of the feet and leaves out the anointing of the head, because the King is the Son of God; as such he is described in the Gospel of John, and that at-

titude of Mary before His feet anointing them is in fullest harmony with the fourth Gospel.

It was an alabaster flask she brought full of ointment of spikenard, very costly. These flasks contained about a pound of this costly ointment; the probable value was 300 denarii, or about $50. It was a very large sum of money in that time, when we remember that a day laborer received only one dinar wages a day. Three hundred denarii was at that time as much as three hundred dollars to-day. How did she obtain so costly an alabaster flask with spikenard? Most likely it had been stored away from bye-gone days. It must have been the most costly she possessed. A heart filled with love and devotion prompted her to bring this costly ointment and pour it over the body of her Lord. To honor Him was her sole object, and that at a time when He was about to be rejected and forsaken by all. And let us not forget that she had learned this devotion and love to Him, manifested in the outpouring of the precious ointment, at His feet. Her heart occupation with the Lord, her anticipation in faith of what was before Him, led her on to do what she did. She had no eyes for what was around her, nor had she ears for the criticism of those who watched her deed. He and He alone was her object.

It should be so with us, and it will be so if we truly abide in Him. We, too, will bring our best to Him. May all we do, yea, the smallest act, be the result of the deepest appreciation of Himself, our wonderful Saviour and Lord.

And much more might be said by way of application of this most blessed incident. For instance from the Gospel of John we learn that the odor of the ointment filled the house. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth," we read in Solomon's song; well may we think of that precious oint-

ment poured forth with its fragrant smell as a type of His death. In the same song we read "while the King sitteth at his table my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." How it must have delighted and refreshed His heart when that ointment enveloped Him with its fragrance.

And now the murmuring. No doubt Judas was the leader of it, as we see in the Gospel of John. Some of the others were influenced by him. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor. This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag and bare what was put therein" (John xii:5-6). Why this waste, What a state of heart these few words reveal! How different from her, who ever must remain the highest type of Christian discipleship—Mary. She gave him the very best she had. The others thought of it as waste, as if anything devoted to the Christ of God, the One altogether lovely, could be waste. These two classes among disciples are still present; but how few the Mary-type in heart devotion.

The words He spoke in appreciation of her service and her gift have come blessedly true. Her act will never be forgotten. Beautifully has a saint written on this occurrence: we quote a part of it:

"Reader, whoever you are, or however you are engaged, ponder this. See that you keep your eye directly upon the Lord in all you do. Make Jesus the immediate object of every little act of service, no matter what. Seek so to do your every work as that He may be able to say, 'It is a good work upon me.' Do not be occupied with the thoughts of men as to your path or as to your work. Do not mind their indignation or their misunderstanding, but pour your alabaster box of ointment upon the person of your Lord. See that your every act of service is the fruit of your heart's

appreciation of Him; and be assured He will appreciate your work and vindicate you before assembled myriads. Thus it was with the woman of whom we have been reading. She took her alabaster box, and made her way to the house of Simon the leper, with one object in her heart, namely, Jesus and what was before Him. She was absorbed in Him. She thought of none beside, but poured her precious ointment on His head. And note the blessed issue. Her act has come down to us, in the gospel record, coupled with His blessed Name. No one can read the gospel without reading also the memorial of her personal devotedness. Empires have risen, flourished, and passed away into the region of silence and oblivion. Monuments have been erected to commemorate human genius, greatness and philanthropy—and these monuments have crumbled into dust; but the act of this woman still lives, and shall live for ever. The hand of the Master has erected a monument to her, which shall never, no never, perish. May we have grace to imitate her; and, in this day, when there is so much of human effort in the way of philanthropy, may our works, whatever they are, be the fruit of our heart's appreciation of an absent, rejected, crucified Lord!"

Mary's devotion was the cause of the failure of the plans of the enemies that the death of the Lord should not take place in the feast. It stirred up the traitor to action. This no doubt is the reason why the Holy Spirit gives the record of the anointing out of its chronological order. Judas' dark deed we behold next. "Then one of the twelve, he was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver Him up to you? And they appointed to him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought a good opportunity that he might deliver Him up" (verses 14-16).

Who was Judas? His surname is given here. Iscariot is composed of two words "Ish" and "Kerioth;" translated "the man of Kerith." He was the only Judean disciple among the twelve, the rest were all from Galilee. This is significant and shows the apostasy of Judah, this man of Kerioth being the heading up of it as ere long there will be another heading up, in the man of sin and the son of perdition, the personal Anti-Christ, who will be a Jew.* In Luke we have the information that Satan entered into him. That mighty enemy, who tempted our Lord and found nothing in Him, who took hold of Peter and used him as mouthpiece when he said, "Be it far from thee, Lord," now takes actual possession of the one, who was indeed his own, for Judas had never believed in Christ. Peter may deny Him and the rest of the disciples forsake their Lord, yet Satan could never enter into them, for they were saved, had life and the power of God kept them. The Lord knew that wicked one among His disciples. "But there are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would deliver Him up" (John vi:64). "He knew him that delivered Him up; on account of this He said, Ye are not all clean" (John xiii:11. Furthermore, all this had been predicted in the Old Testament. See Zechariah xi:12; Psalms xli:9; lxix:25; clx:8. And the price for which Judas betrayed the King was the price of a servant, a slave, according to Exodus xxi:32.

And now the great event, the complete fulfillment of

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*We desire to caution our readers against a fanciful teaching, which lacks scriptural support, that Judas will be raised up during the great tribulation and will be that man of sin, the Antichrist foretold in 2 Thess. ii. Such teaching coming from otherwise reputable teachers of the Bible does much harm.

His own predictions concerning His sufferings and His death, draws nearer. He was not taken by surprise in anything. In the calmest dignity He moves on, knowing His Father's will He had come to do and that the mighty work could never fail, but would be accomplished. He is ready to pay the purchase price, to give all, to die for the nation, to obtain the treasure and the field and the one pearl of great price likewise. And now we follow Him and the disciples to the feast.

"Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city unto such a one, and say to him, The Teacher says, My time is near, I will keep the passover with my disciples in thy house. And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the passover. And when the evening was come He lay down at table with the twelve. And as they were eating He said, Verily I say to you, that one of you shall deliver Me up. And being exceedingly grieved they began to say to Him, each of them, Is it I, Lord? But He answering said, He that dips his hand with Me in the dish, he it is that shall deliver Me up. The Son of Man goes indeed according as it is written concerning Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is delivered up; it were good for that man if he had not been born. And Judas, who delivered Him up, answering said, Is it I, Rabbi? He says to him, Thou hast said" (verses 17-25).

Is it not the purpose of our exposition to compare the different Gospel records, and so we shall not refer to the different accounts, which certainly are not conflicting. The first day of the feast of the unleavened bread was the day on which the passover was to be killed (Luke xxii:7). It

is, therefore, clear that He and His disciples commemorated then the Jewish Paschal Supper. He Himself does the ordering and manifests Himself as Lord throughout. Once more He announces the nearness of His passion—"My time is near." What a moment that was! They had attempted before to take His life. That was impossible. The time is now near, His time, when the King was to lay down His life. Directly we see Him at the table with the twelve, and while they were eating He announces the fact of one of them being the traitor. What follows in that conversation may well be taken for a last warning to Judas. The Lord had seen him turning to the chief priests and knew of his bargaining with them. He read the whole dark story in that heart, which was before Him, the omniscient One, as an opened book. "Verily I say to you, that one of you shall deliver me up." This must have been aimed at the conscience of Judas Iscariot. Did he also show surprise? Did his face turn red or into paleness as he saw the innermost thoughts of his heart revealed? Each of them, with the exception of Judas, asks the question, Is it I, Lord? Judas is silent. Under the power of that awful being, Satan, who held him in his grasp, he hardens his heart. But more than that the Lord speaks. "He that dips his hand with me in the dish, he it is who shall deliver me up." The more detailed account of all this we find in the Gospel of John. While here we have only the fact stated of the betrayer dipping his hand into the dish, in John we read that the Lord gave him a sop. And Judas could take that morsel, a token of the love of the Lord whom he had rejected and was about to betray. It was a silent offer from the side of the Lord to give even to him, but he would not. He rejects that offer. Again we have the record for the second time that Satan entered into him (John xiii:27). It was right

after he had taken the morsel. The last offer was rejected, and now Satan gains a still firmer hold upon him and possesses him fully. At last these closed lips open. What awful, satanic hypocrisy he utters! "Is it I, Rabbi?" Such hypocrisy in the presence of Him who is the Truth can only be explained by the presence of that being in Judas, who is the father of lies. It is also a significant fact that Judas did not say "Lord," but he used the word "Rabbi" instead. This is evidence that he never had received Him as Lord and believed on Him as the Lord. He had power conferred on him to drive out the demons and to heal the sick—messianic power, coming from the King, but he was nevertheless an unbeliever. "Rabbi" he said, because Satan had entered into him, and Satan refuses to call Him Lord. Yet the time will come when all knees, including Judas, must bow at (not in) the names of Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. For thus it is written: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and granted Him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory" (Phil. xi:9-11). From the lips of the Lord he hears the "Woe," and, according to the Gospel of John, "he went out immediately and it was night." He went out into a night without a morning, into eternal night, the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 13). And all who reject that Lord, who wilfully close their hearts against Him and refuse His authority, go into that night.

In connection with this solemn scene we find the description of another scene. We have now the record of the institution of that great and blessed memorial, generally called the Lord's supper.

"And as they were eating, Jesus, having taken the bread and blessed, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And having taken the cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood, that of the new covenant, that is shed for many for remission of sins. But I say to you that I will not at all drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father. And having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives" (verses 26-30). What the passover feast of the Jews commemorated is so well known that it does not need further mention here. And now the true passover Lamb is about to be slain and He institutes another feast, a great and blessed memorial of His mighty work, of His sacrificial death upon the cross. "On that night the Jewish dispensation came to an end. The Passover, its great institution, had fulfilled its purpose; the Paschal Lamb it prepared for and prefigured was the next day to be slain. The same night saw the inauguration of a new feast which embodies the fundamental truth of Christianity, as the Passover embodied the fundamental truth of Judaism."* How fearfully the words of our blessed Lord have been misused, what blasphemous doctrines have been built upon the simple language of the Lord and how this blessed memorial has become the occasion for strife, violence and even bloodshed, we do not care to follow in our exposition. It would take hundreds of pages to record all that. The Roman dogma of the transubstantiation is a downright blasphemy. Hundreds of saints have been tortured and killed for stating thus the lie of transubstantiation, and, if Rome could, she would do the same in the present day. This transubstantiation claims that the bread and wine are changed into the real

*Weston in the Genesis of the New Testament.

body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then there is the consubstantiation, the doctrine that the body and blood of Christ coexists in and with the bread and wine, although they retain their nature as bread and wine. This is more or less the teaching of the Lutheran church. But we refrain from following the different teachings concerning the Lord's supper. What can be more evident than that the new feast He instituted is a memorial? The Passover feast was a feast of remembrance, and what He does here on that solemn night was a simple meal to commemorate the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood. The account given here of the institution of the Lord's supper is in harmony with the character of this first Gospel. The Holy Spirit gives the record to show the blood of the new covenant, which the lamb of God shed for many, in contrast to the Jewish Passover, the old covenant which was exclusively only for the Jewish people. If we turn to the Gospel of Luke, which is wider in its scope than the Gospel of Matthew, we read the words, which give to the Lord's supper decidedly the character of a memorial. "Do this in remembrance of Me." It is then simply this to remember Him, not to receive anything, but to remember Him and His love. This is still more enforced by another record which we have of this great memorial. We find a record outside of the Gospels altogether. This record was given by revelation to the Apostle Paul: "For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup after having supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, this do, as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and

drink the cup ye announce the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. xi:23-26). And what better way could there be than the way He has shown in this request to remember Him, in this simple ceremony of breaking the bread and partaking of it and drinking from the cup? No doubt this request was fulfilled by the Saints of earliest date on every Lord's day; Acts xx:7 certainly gives one that impression; yet there is no law about it. The soul that is occupied with Him will ever long to fulfill that request He left in that night ere He was delivered up. "Till He comes" up to the time when we shall see Him face to face in the Father's house. It ever keeps Him, His death for us and His coming again as a bright and blessed reality before the heart.

"See the feast of Love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread;
Sweet memorials—till the Lord
Call us around His heavenly board;
Some from earth, from Glory some,
Severed only till He come."

But we return to the words of the Lord in this Gospel. Significant is the statement "But I say unto you, that I will not at all drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." These words are characteristic to this Gospel. In Luke and Mark we read that He speaks of Himself as not drinking of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God has come. But here He speaks of that day when not only He will drink it anew but when He will drink it anew with His disciples in the kingdom of His Father. The words are beautifully in order in this Gospel, which, as we have learned, tells us so much of the kingdom. There is a day coming when that Kingdom will come in power and in

Glory. It is the day of His return. Then His own will be associated with Him in heavenly Glory. For a deeper knowledge of that drinking anew with Him, the wine, the fullest joy in that mighty coming Manifestation, we have to wait till that day of Glory breaks. Dispensationally we see the King separated from His own people till the hour strikes when His Kingdom comes.

And now they leave the room after they had sung a hymn. This has been and is still the custom of the Jews in connection with the passover feast. Indeed it would be interesting and helpful to mention here the passover customs of the Jews; they are full of significant ceremonies. However this would lead us too far. Suffice it to say that the hymn they sang consisted of Psalms Cxv, Cxvi, Cxvii and Cxviii. In the Jewish ritual they are called the great Hallel. With what emotion of soul He must have sung with His disciples! What encouragement it must have been for Him! These Psalms contain such blessed and full messianic predictions. "The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." These words come in at the close of that hymn they sung, and while the disciples sang them as they had done so often before as pious Jews, for Him it meant so much. A little while longer, just a few hours, and the builders would reject Him. A few days more and by resurrection from the dead He would be the head of the corner, the chief stone, and in that shout, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord," He saw in the distant future a welcome from the remnant of His people, at the time of His Second Coming. And so the

blessed One even then saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied.

The last notes have died away and He speaks again. "Then said Jesus to them, All ye shall be offended in me during this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad; but after that I shall be risen, I will go before you to Galilee. And Peter answering said to Him, If all shall be offended in Thee, I will never be offended. Jesus said to him, Verily I say to thee, that during this night, before the cock shall crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter saith to Him, If I should need die with Thee, I will in nowise deny Thee. Likewise said all the disciples also" (verses 31-35). He revealed thus what was before them. The Scripture to which He refers is found in Zechariah. They were His sheep and He the shepherd, as He speaks of Himself in the Gospel of John, the good shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep. But the smiting of the shepherd, the smiting of Him who is called in that prophecy of Zechariah the fellow of God (Zech. xiii:7), what was that to be? The cry of the forsaken One on the cross gives us the answer. He knew all that was before Him.* And again we notice His calmness, His dignity through all this, which to a mere man would have been an almost unbearable ordeal. Then He announces His resurrection and that He would go before them to Galilee. Later we shall find the risen One there with His disciples, announcing the fact that He has all power in heaven and on earth. There is no mention made of His ascension. Peter now looms up. Once more poor

*The teaching of the so-called critics, so strong to-day throughout the professing church, a school which claims that the Lord had no full knowledge of what the Scriptures contained, this teaching must be branded as wickedness.

Peter acts in self-confidence in his own strength. The Lord had told Him before, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after" (John xiii:36). What significant words these were. They remind one of the third chapter of Joshua, of the record of the passing over Jordan. There was to be a space of two thousand cubits between the ark of the covenant and the people. The ark of the covenant of the Lord, typifying Christ, was alone by itself and had to make way for the people, and they followed after. So Peter would follow Him and die with Him, but he could not. Afterwards at the Lake of Tiberias the risen Christ tells him that he should indeed follow, revealing the time and the manner of his death, a death which the grace of God, the strength of the Lord made alone possible. Here he acts in the flesh, and in spite of the Lord's warning, he maintains that attitude, the attitude of self-confidence. The Lord announces his soon coming denial, the record of which we find at the close of our chapter.

"Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane, and says to the disciples, sit here until I go away and pray yonder. And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed. Then He says to them, My soul is very sorrowful even unto death; remain here and watch with Me. And going forward a little He fell upon His face, praying and saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me; but not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping, and says to Peter, Thus ye have not been able to watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak. Again a going away a second time He prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass from Me unless I drink it, Thy will be done. And

coming He found them again sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them He went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then He comes to the disciples and says to them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold the hour has drawn nigh, and the Son of man is delivered up into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go; behold he that delivers me up has drawn nigh." (Verses 36-46.)

What a holy scene it is that is now before us! We are face to face with the most solemn event in the life of the Son of God, save that hour when He hung on the cross, forsaken by God. It is a Scripture which we approach with the greatest caution; the words are ringing in our ears, the words which Moses heard when he stood in divine presence "put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." It is a scene which draws out the heart in worship and adoration for it was for us He passed through this deep agony, for us that He, the mighty Creator fell on His face, into the dust of earth, He had created.

Hark! what sounds of bitter weeping,
From yon lonesome garden sweep?
'Tis the Lord His vigil keeping,
Whilst His followers sink in sleep.
Ah, my soul, He loved thee,
Yes, He gave Himself for me.
He is speaking to His Father,
Tasting deep that bitter cup,
Yet He takes it, willing rather
For our sakes to drink it up.
Oh what love! He loved me!
Gave Himself, my soul, for thee.

Even so, He loved me and gave Himself for me. Oh

Thou blessed Lord, what agony Thou didst go through for the sake of having us poor, vile, miserable, lost sinners with Thee and share Thy presence and Glory throughout eternity. And how little we appreciate, honor and adore Thee! Much rather would we write in the strain of devotion and worship than to attempt by feeble human words a closer study of Gethsemane. Of *an exposition* of the events of that night we dare not speak. The suffering of our Lord in the garden is beyond the ken of any saint; no saint of God will ever be able to fathom the deep mystery of the sufferings of the holy One. If we could fully grasp His marvelous personality, how holy, how absolutely holy He was and absolutely perfect in Himself, we might be able to enter deeper into the agony of our Lord. Only the right estimate of His Person can give us, at least in part, a little of the meaning of His deep sorrow unto death.

But alas! just into this holy scene man with his reason and wrong conception has intruded and by attempting to solve the mystery of the suffering of the Lord has put dishonor upon His person. Different interpretations are about, which belittle and dishonor Him. We would rather pass these by, but it is expedient that we do not.

But recently, in a leading christian magazine, the following appeared from the pen of a well known preacher:

The second interpretation is, that He prayed literally to be delivered from *death,* then and there; that the severity of His agony was such that His physical nature was unable to bear it, and, unless sustained miraculously, life would have become extinct in the Garden of Gethsemane; that the conflict with Satan was so intense and prolonged that His human nature would have given way but for the Father's help. In this aspect, this was the gravest crisis of His dependence and need, and the Father did support and sustain, so that, instead of dying in Gethsemane, He was enabled and strengthened to go on to the greater agony and crisis of Cavalry. We confess that our own minds turn absolutely and instinctively to the

latter of these interpretations as the more rational, scriptural, and satisfactory.

We do not deny, that this interpretation is rational, but it is far from being scriptural. Indeed it has the elements of wicked doctrine in it. If it is true "that the conflict with Satan was so intense and prolonged that His human nature would have given way but for the Father's help" then Satan must have had the power to slay the Prince of Life. The reader will see at once to what such a conception must lead us. This interpretation likewise speaks of the agony His physical nature was unable to bear unless sustained miraculously and the possibility of His life becoming extinct in the garden. He, instead of dying on the cross, dying in Gethsemane. All this dishonors our Lord. We cannot tolerate such a thought for a moment. His life could never become extinct in Gethsemane; there was no such danger of His death. At no time was our blessed Lord in danger of death. His body was not mortal but immortal. Death is the result of sin; where there is no sin death has no claim. Our Lord could never die under the attacks of the enemy. On the cross where He, who knew no sin was made sin for us, He gave His life; then as our substitute He died. His death could never take place till that solemn moment had come, when He was made sin for us on the cross. Furthermore He said: "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John x:17-18). Another view has recently been advanced. A brother wrote us about this as follows: "Have you seen anywhere that in Gethsemane, our Lord was delivered from death which he feared, according to Hebrews v; and was strengthened to go on to the death on the cross, at which

He aimed, and for which He came? His willingness to stop short of His finished work, and let all that He had accomplished thus far go if the Father so willed it, is the greatest instance of submission on record." The first statement is not true, as He was not delivered from death and the second statement is inconceivable. How could He be willing to stop short of His finished work, when He entered into the world for that very purpose and all depended on that work? How could He be willing to stop short of it after His own Spirit in the prophets had spoken of His sufferings and the accomplishment of this work of atonement? Such a conception is highly fanciful and full of mysticism. We refrain from pointing out other difficulties connected with this theory of His sufferings in the garden. But did He perhaps shrink from the physical sufferings of the cross, as others have maintained? Assuredly not, for He had announced so often, as we have seen in this Gospel, His rejection, suffering and death. And if it was not all that which is suggested in these different interpretations of His agony, what was it then? What was that cup which He dreaded? What was that sorrow unto death? It was this very fact we stated before, that He the Holy, the Spotless One, the One who is the image of God, was soon to be made sin and to stand in the presence of God, no longer as the Beloved One, but in the sinner's stead. God's face upon which He had ever gazed which had ever smiled upon Him was soon to be hid. That eternal love He enjoyed was to be no longer upon Him, but in its place judgment and wrath of God. And what was it when at last He was made sin for us? That awful cry from the cross gives us the answer, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But oh! what did that cry mean for that Holy One? Shall we ever know its depths and the awful suffering the Holy One,

made sin for us, had to pass through, when thus He cried? From this His holy soul shrank. His holiness and perfection even made this shrinking necessary. He could do nothing else but shrink from it, and yet He bows in perfect submission and obedience to the Father's will. Not my will but Thy will be done. This was before Him in the garden in that dark night of agony and sorrow. And here we would rest. But all praise and adoration to Thee our blessed Saviour and Lord for all Thine agony and sorrow and for Thine obedience unto the death of the cross!

Two Scriptures, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New, may be mentioned as giving further light on Gethsemane. The one hundred and second Psalm may be rightly termed "The Gethsemane Psalm." Its superscription is, "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before God." It begins with the deepest distress and ends with the eternal Glory of the One who was in such sorrow. In the first part of this Psalm we find the great sorrow. Well may one think here of that pathetic outburst found elsewhere in the Word, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. i:12). First we hear His cry, "Hide not Thy face from Me in the day when I am in trouble." Then He speaks of His days being consumed; His bones burned, His heart smitten and withered like grass; He is alone in His weeping and crying. Then again we hear the voice of the sufferer. "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said oh my God, take me not away in the midst of my days * * *." The words which follow are not addressed by the agonizing sufferer to God, but God addresses them to the sufferer, who is prostrated before Him. No one could have ever had this conception if the Holy Spirit had not given us the key.

In the first chapter of Hebrews the closing words of the Psalm are quoted and there they are given as addressed by God Himself to the Son. As in the twenty-second Psalm, the deepest humiliation and then the exaltation of the One who suffered so we find it in the Gethsemane Psalm. The last verses of the one hundred and second Psalm are God's answer to the One who is bowed down in deepest sorrow.

The other passage we have in mind is the familiar one in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death, with strong crying and tears (and having been heard because of His piety); though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb. v:7, 8). There is no doubt but these words refer us back to the Gethsemane scene. The supplications and entreaties with strong crying and tears took place in Gethsemane; yea, even more than that, the sweat as if it were great drops of blood. But it does not say that He was saved "*from*" death. It is often assumed that He cried to be saved from death and upon this some of these Christ dishonoring conceptions are formed. He cried to Him who was able to save Him *out* of death. And He was heard. The answer came in His resurrection from the dead. But to return to the scene in the garden. Where do we find His disciples? Three He had taken with Him and told them to remain there and watch with Him. Soon they were asleep. They were on the holy mountain with Him, eye-witnesses of His Glory. And did they sleep then? Luke ix:32 gives us the answer. "But Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw His Glory, and the two men that stood with Him." This manifests what the flesh is, which is fully exhibited in the disciples. Their Lord in tender love, appearing almost

as if He looked for their sympathy, had requested them to watch with Him. Instead they sleep. How could they have looked into His loving face, with the solemn feeling upon them of great events soon to come and then going to sleep! Did that show love for Him? And He had spoken to them about not falling into temptation. They did not realize their need and their danger. And what tenderness and grace He manifests toward His disciples, who had failed! Oh the Glory of Himself even in that dark hour; how it shines forth! After He had prayed the third time He said to them, "Sleep on now and take your rest; behold, the hour is nigh, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners." Marvelous words of grace, calmness and dignity. The Shepherd is ready to give His life for the sheep, that they might have life and rest. The sword is soon to be unsheathed and fall upon the Shepherd, the man called by God "my fellow" (Zech. xiii:7). The Lamb of God is ready to take away the sin of the world, ready to go to the slaughter as a lamb and as a sheep dumb before her shearers. Yea, the Holy One, the adorable, blessed One is ready to be stricken and smitten of God. What a path was His! Humbling Himself, He became obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. The last part of that path is now before Him. What a theme it is! What food for our souls and what exercise of soul it brings to contemplate Him who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame.

What other applications of this touching scene in Gethsemane might be made. How it teaches us submission and obedience and the highest prayer, the sweetest prayer as well to our Loving Father "Not my will but thy will be done." We leave these meditations to our readers with the prayer that He Himself may speak to each heart. Oh Lord, our

Lord, we cannot fathom Thy Being, we cannot fully understand what Thou wast, but we know Thy love for us! We praise and adore Thee. Make Thyself a greater reality to our hearts. Amen.

And what a story it is which we have before us, the story of the passion of the King. And who could be able to follow the Lamb of God and fathom the depths of His sorrow! What it must have been for Him, the Holy, spotless One, to be thus delivered into the hands of sinners! Again we say that it is quite impossible to write an exposition of all these solemn events connected with the suffering and death of our Lord. Much of what might be written by way of application we must leave unsaid; it would take volumes to do that.

It was while He was still speaking to His disciples that the enemies came to take hold of Him, to take the Beloved of the Father captive. "And while He was yet speaking, Behold Judas, one of the twelve came, and with him a great crowd with swords and sticks" (verse 47). It seems that Judas made good use of his time since he left the room where the feast was kept. The Lord had said to him, knowing the thoughts of his dark heart, "What thou doest, do quickly." Possessed by Satan, he had rushed forth into the dark night, and, in feverish haste, led on by the evil one, he had succeeded in all his plans. The officers and a detachment of Roman soldiers, most likely several hundred, were put at his disposal. These carried swords and other weapons, besides lanterns and torches. These were Gentiles; perhaps of different countries, such which Rome had conquered. But there were others, and they carried sticks. The temple guard had turned out in full force; these were the hirelings of the chief priests and elders. The rabble of the street no doubt was also represented, for it was a great crowd. What

a scene! Gentiles and Jews come to lay their hands on the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, ready to commit the greatest sin. All the sinfulness of sin is now to be manifested. But why such a great multitude and such precaution to capture one man, who was "meek and lowly"? What a testimony after all to His power, which they feared and yet what blindness.

Judas appears first on the scene. Behold Judas! What a surprise it must have been for the disciples, aroused from sleep, to find him present who had withdrawn from them under such mysterious circumstances. From the Gospel of Luke we learn that he was not only the leader of the great crowd but he walked ahead of them. What a subtle plan he had laid, and in it the cunning of that same Serpent which was in that garden, in which the first Adam had been placed. How cunning and yet how blunt. All had been arranged so as to make His escape impossible. The traitor was to kiss Him so that the Lord might be known and likewise become detached from the disciples; then they were to press at once upon Him and capture Him. All was carefully premeditated. Judas by his action and his plan shows that he did not believe in the Lord as the Son of God; he knew His power. When he walked before them he may have cunningly aimed at the hiding of his satanic deed.

And now he reaches the side of Him whom he still calls "Rabbi." The first word he utters was a word of joy. *"Oh, the joy!* Rabbi"—thus it reads in literal translation. Then he kissed Him eagerly. The symbol of love, devotion and faithfulness so much used in the Orient is used by the traitor. What must the Holy One have suffered, when the one who had been in His loving company came up and had uttered that word, "Oh, the Joy"? What suffering must have passed through that loving heart when He felt the vile lips of that one upon His cheeks!

And to think that He who rebuked the sea and it obeyed His voice, whose omnipotent word had healed the sick and raised the dead, should thus be delivered up. Oh, what a story it is!

"But Jesus said to him, Friend, for what purpose art thou come?" What calm and gentle answer to the satan-possessed Judas Iscariot. Should not this tender question have touched the conscience of the traitor? He was beyond hope. It is significant that the Lord addresses him with the word, Friend. Yet it is a different word which the Lord used in calling His disciples as recorded in John xv. The word He uses here signifies "companion." Judas had been a companion of the Lord, He had beheld His mighty works, and had by Him messianic power to heal the sick conferred upon himself. This is the last word that wicked man ever heard addressed to himself by the Lord. The next time we behold him is when he is filled with remorse, casting the pieces of silver in the temple; then he went and hanged himself.

And now they laid hands upon the Lord and seized Him. The rough hands of the inhuman Roman soldiers, the cruel hands of the hating Jewish mob took hold of that sinless body of the Lamb of God. All were energized by Satan who stands behind all this and that which follows; it is the hour of darkness and the manifestation of the power of darkness upon Him, the willing sacrifice.

But far different is the description of His betrayal in the Gospel of John. Not a word is said in that Gospel of His agony in the garden. As Son of God, described in the fourth Gospel, no such record would be in order. And when they come to take Him, He meets them with a calm, "Whom seek ye?" His majestic answer "I am," makes the whole multitude of Roman soldiers, temple guards and the mob fall down. "They went backward and fell to the

ground." All He needed to do was to walk away and disappear between the trees of the garden. There is, of course, no discrepancy here. The Gospel of John simply shows the divine side of that scene. He allowed Himself bound, and that with the condition "let these go away." He surrenders Himself; His own are free. Blessed hint of that precious Gospel of the Son of God.

An incident is connected with this great event which is full of instruction. The hasty action of Peter, as we learn from the Gospel of John, almost marred the gracious scene, and only the Lord's hand could overrule the serious consequences of that action and bring good out of it. The confusion of the disciples must have been great when their beloved Master was taken captive. To see how the meek One, whom they had followed, at whose feet they had sat, in whom they believed as the Christ of God, was taken by these rough men, was too much for them. They had between themselves two swords. The words of the Lord about "Selling his garment and buying a sword" had been taken literally by them. Simon Peter possessed one of these swords, and had he not said he would be willing to lay down his life for the Lord? Now the opportunity had come to show his willingness to redeem his promise and his loyalty to his Master. In fearful rashness he draws the sword and strikes the one next to him. He strikes with the intent to kill. The one hit is the servant of the High Priest by name of Malchus. The mercy of the Lord prevented the worst and Peter only takes off the ear of the servant. Surely it was courage in Peter to do this. To attack such a large body of people was fearlessness; loyalty to Christ was the cause of the action. And yet how it belittled the Lord! Did He who had said just the word "I am" and his enemies had fallen into the dust, need such a defense? Did He who

willingly stretched out His hands, the willing captive, need Peter's interference to make Him free? Upon the holy mount Peter had quite lost sight of the dignity of Him whom he called Lord and classed Him with Moses and Elias, and here he errs in the same manner. The Lord has to remind him of his mistake. "Return thy sword to its place; for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot now call upon my Father, and He will furnish me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (verses 52-54). If it were a case of self-help how easy it would have been for Him to summon the angels. Peter stood in all probability in the attitude of defiance, ready to strike again if he should be attacked in return. He is told to put up the sword. Though loyal to the Lord, he had dishonored Him and not manifested the graciousness and mind of Him, whom He tried to defend. Alas! how many of us have followed impulsive Peter in this action.

The Scriptures had to be fulfilled, and from now on we see indeed the fulfillment of Scripture. Elsewhere we read that the Lord touched the ear of the wounded servant and healed him. It was the last miracle of healing the Lord performed before He went to the cross, and that was done to an enemy. In the tumult and confusion of the hour the act of Peter passed unnoticed.

"In that hour said Jesus to the crowds, Are ye come out against a robber with swords and sticks to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple and ye did not seize me? But all this is come to pass that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left Him and fled" (verses 55-56). The word He had spoken was now fulfilled, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and

the sheep shall be scattered." The Shepherd is left alone. We pass over the account found only in the Gospel of Mark about the young man who followed clad in a linen garment.

Alone and forsaken the blessed Lord is taken away captive. What a scene it must have been! The fleeing disciples disappearing in the darkness of the night, the mob leading Him hence; no doubt they buffeted Him with blasphemous curses dragging Him along and so soon Gethsemane, the place of that solemn drama, is enshrouded in the stillness of the night. But oh, what it was that took place there. The mighty Creator, the Son of God, the Holy One in His agony and sinful man laying hold of the Lord of Glory!

We will be obliged as we pass on in meditating on the passion of our Saviour to confine ourselves strictly to the Gospel, which we study. We do not write an exposition of the entire story of His suffering and what was done to the Man of Sorrows, but only as the Holy Spirit has recorded these events in the first Gospel. And in doing this, we shall point out only the leading features.

First we see Him before Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. They expected Him to be brought in. What triumph must there have been upon their faces, when at last in that memorable night, the One whom they hated and despised was brought securely bound into their presence, under arrest in the hands of the Gentiles.

He must appear before the ecclesiastical council first; He must be tried there. But what can they say against Him? What evil had He done? They had watched Him closely. Deputations, one after another, had tried to ensnare Him. Pharisees and Sadducees, as we have seen in our study of this Gospel, had come to tempt Him. They found noth-

ing in Him. He had asked the question in one of His great discourses, which they had heard. Which of you convinces Me of sin? There was no answer. He was the sinless One, the perfect and holy One. But it is their hour and the power of darkness. Thus we read: "And the chief priests and the elders and the whole Sanhedrim sought false witness against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death." But did they succeed? "And they found none, though many false witnesses came forward". They could find nothing. Therefore, He ought to be freed. "But at the last two false witnesses came forward and said, He said I am able to destroy the temple of God, and in three days build it." But this was a wrong quotation of His words and a wrong application. Besides this, as we learn from the Gospel of Mark, the witnesses did not agree amongst themselves. It was impossible to convict Him on such a charge. He had not a word to say. They look upon Him with their awful hatred. The high priest attempts to get Him to answer. "Answereth Thou nothing?" "But Jesus was silent". It is obvious they could not convict Him. The charge against Him was blasphemy. They had miserably failed in proving anything whatever against the Lord. But condemned to death, He must be. He must die.

There remained just one thing to be done, and that was to put a question to Him directly, a question, which He could not refuse to answer. Why did they not do this at once? He had first to be shown as the Holy One, the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. The moment has come. Most likely the Highpriest in his excitement had arisen from his seat. The silent victim stands immediately before Him. They are face to face. The furious, heated face of Caiaphas looks into the loving tender eyes of the Lord. Did this high priest and his associates know that this lowly

One, standing bound in their presence, is the Son of God, the promised Messiah? They knew that He had given the witness to that effect throughout His public ministry. He had not only given the self-witness, that He and the Father are one, that He is the Son of God, but His works had fully established His Deity. The last question the Lord put to the Pharisees concerning the Christ, whose son He is, (Chap. xxii) had been answered by Him in a way they all understood. There was no doubt, they knew Him, even as the Lord had said in the parable, "He is the Heir; come let us kill Him". The highpriest knew he would succeed if he put that question concerning His Sonship to Him. But little he knew what he was doing; the blessed One could not be condemned by false witnesses. His own confession of who He was, the confession of the truth alone could bring about His condemnation. "And the highpriest answering said to Him, I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus says to Him, Thou hast said. Moreover, I say to you, From henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Verses 63-64.)

Under that oath He could not be silent. For this moment He was waiting to witness that good confession. He confesses Himself the Christ, the Son of God and witnesses to His future Glory at the right hand of power, and His visible manifestation at the time of His Coming again in the clouds of heaven. What a confirmation of the fact that He is the willing sacrifice of the Holy One, who will drink that bitter cup and fulfill the Scriptures. "They all heard it—and, as the Law directed when blasphemy was spoken, the highpriest rent both his outer and inner garment, with a rent that might never be repaired. But his

object was attained. Christ would neither explain, modify, nor retract His claims. They all had heard it. What use was there of witnesses." Behold now ye have heard the blasphemy. "Then turning to those assembled, he put to them the usual question which preceded the formal sentence of death. As given in the rabbinic original it is: "What think ye gentlemen? And they answered, if for life, "For Life." If for death: "For death." But the formal sentence of death, which if it had been a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin, must now have been spoken by the President, was not pronounced."*

"What think ye?" And they answering said, He is liable to the penalty of death?" (Verse 66.) What a justice! Satanic, fiendish injustice rather. But there He stands, the silent Lamb of God. What a picture! Oh that we might behold Him once more as He stood before this company of His enemies. What calmness. "Majestic in His silence, majestic in His speech; unmoved by threats to speak, unmoved by threats when He had spoken."

And now affecting the scene, which follows. His confession set the powers of darkness loose and the undefending Christ, the Son of God is tasting a little of the cup He had to drink. Oh to think of it! They spit in His face! That face, which in loving tenderness had gazed with compassion upon the multitudes, yea, that face, the image of the invisible God, was covered with vile spittle of men. How He must have suffered! They buffeted Him, struck Him with the palms of their hands, mocked Him. And not a word, not a murmur came from His blessed lips. "When reviled, He reviled not again, when suffering, He threatened not." And reader! it was all for such vile sinners as we are! He loved us and gave Himself for us. What a Saviour! How little we think of Him; how little

*Edersheim.

that which He did for us is before our hearts and has a governing power over our lives. Oh Lord! Thou art worthy of all. And then to think that such a Saviour is rejected of those for whom He suffered thus, dishonored, His mighty work denied among those who profess His name.

The last paragraph of this solemn chapter concerns Peter. Peter had followed Him at a distance, even to the palace of the highpriest and entering in, sat with the officers to see the end. Perhaps when they all had fled, he remembered his promise to the Lord and so at a distance he followed. Far better it would have been for Peter if he had not followed at all. "Now Peter sat without in the court, and a maiden came unto him and said, Thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he had gone out into the entrance, another saw him, and said unto those that were there, this man also was with Jesus, the Nazarēan. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. But after a little while, they that stood by came and said unto Peter: Of a truth thou art also of them, for even thy speech discovereth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus that He had spoken, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And going out, he wept bitterly" (verses 69-75).

Poor Peter has to learn the depths of his own self. In self assertion and self confidence, he had boasted to lay his life down for the Lord. His Lord knew him; he was a true believer, but did not know the weakness of himself. That weakness had to be uncovered, he had to be sifted as the Lord had told him. Far different was the case of Judas. He was not a believer at all, only a professing one, and the wickedness of the flesh is manifested in his case.

Peter, as a true believer, did not know what the flesh was, as alas so many believers are ignorant of the true nature of the flesh. There was no willingness in Peter to sin; he wanted to do that which he had told the Lord, but he was ignorant of his own weakness. Step by step he had approached this sad and sorrowful moment. He did not plunge suddenly into the out and out denial of the Lord; he never meant to say what he did say. Had any one told him, "Peter, you are going to curse and swear, declaring, I know not the man", he would have shuddered in horror and vowed, he could never do such a thing. Gradually he had been drawn towards this awful denial. "Watch and pray" the Lord had said "that ye enter not into temptation". Peter had slept; he had neglected prayer. He could not watch an hour with His Lord. Here the first step was made. Because he was ignorant of the real character of the flesh, that old nature, he did not pray. If he had known what the flesh is he would have cast himself upon the Lord and watched and prayed. And this is the cause of every denial of our blessed Lord; and how numerous these are!

What sad repetitions of Peter's fall in the lives of God's people. The absolute worthlessness of the flesh is learned and learned over and over again by many a sad experience. The consciousness of our utter weakness in ourselves must ever lead us into a closer fellowship in prayer with Himself. But over this sad scene of failure and denial was the gracious, loving praying Lord. Peter was His own; he could not go the way Judas went. He had foreseen all. Ere it happened He told Peter what he would do and how Satan's power linked with the flesh would result in his denial. But more than that the Lord had prayed for him. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Where would

have Peter been, if it had not been for that prayer of the Lord. And so His loving eye watched him, and when the sin was committed and the right moment came, there was not a word spoken to Peter, but the Lord looked upon Peter. Their eyes met. That was enough. What was in that look? An angry reminder what Peter had done? A frown which showed displeasure? Far from that. It must have been a tender, loving, sad look. It went home to Peter's heart. He remembers now. The horror of his denial breaks upon him. Had he not been the Lord's own, had he not known the Lord, Satan who had led him gradually on, would have rushed him into despair. But we see him rushing out and behold him in the night, the dawning morning in the East, convulsed with bitter weeping. What a weeping it was, the tears of repentance, selfjudgment flowed freely. Broken in heart and broken in spirit with that tender look burning in his soul, he weeps and weeps. Reader do you know anything of such tears? You do if you walk with the Lord. Another one rushes out too when that morning had come. He went out and—hanged himself. Satan claims his own. Oh what a loving Saviour and Lord we have. How He dealt with Peter. How He has dealt with us and still cares for His own, prays for them and keeps them and restores them to service as He did with His denying Peter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In this great chapter we follow the Lamb of God to the cross. What a journey it was! He, who had lived that wonderful life, had healed the sick, commanded the demons, raised the dead, He, who is announced in the beginning of this Gospel to be Immanuel, God manifested in flesh, the Beloved of the Father is in the hands of men, led away to the cross. What sufferings were His? Who is able to follow the depths of that shame, which He despised, the cross which He endured? But feebly we can meditate on these things, which He suffered in our stead.

The previous chapter closed with that sad record of Peter's denial and his bitter weeping. The Lord had given His great confession before the highpriest, the confession of truth, which resulted in His being condemned to death. The morning had come after this eventful night.* There was no sleep for many in that night. The Son of God who had watched and prayed in the garden saw no sleep; dragged along He was and reviled by sinners. Peter saw no sleep; he went out and wept. The forsaking disciples did not sleep; they had fled terror stricken. The chief priests waked and plotted on how to proceed against the Holy One in putting Him into the hands of the Roman governor. Securely bound they led Him away through the streets of Jerusalem, to hand Him over to Pontius Pilate. (Verses 1-2.) What humiliation for Him to be

*We cannot enter here into the chronology of that week to correct some of the errors of the traditional view.

thus led away! What a contrast with that which happened a few days before, when He was welcomed by the multitudes as the King of Israel!

But before we see Him standing in the presence of the roman governor, the Holy Spirit gives us the record of what became of Judas. "Then Judas, who delivered Him up, seeing that He had been condemned, filled with remorse, returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,. saying, I have sinned in having delivered up guiltless blood" (verses 3-4). No doubt he stood there and witnessed all what was done to the Lord. He too spent a sleepless night. He saw the meek and lowly One, buffeted and spit upon. It left him all unmoved; there was no love for the Lord in that heart. Did he expect the Lord to manifest that power of which he, the traitor had been so often an eye witness? Perhaps this very thought it was, which Satan, who had entered into him suggested. His love for money, Satan used as bait. He may have whispered "You get the money and he will take care of Himself. He will not die but get free." Thus Judas was deceived to sell the Lord. What a sin covetousness, the love of money is! It is the root of all evil; it is idolatry. And this sin is one of the great sins of the present day. Its worst feature is that betrayal of the Lord and His truth, for "filthy lucre's sake" which goes on in Christendom. Professed teachers, who are described in the Epistle of Jude and in the Second Epistle of Peter, who are nothing but natural men, not having the Spirit, who use great swelling words, which the world calls "oratory" are betraying the Lord as Judas did. They are rushing too in a darkness, just as dense as that into which Judas rushed that night. The Word declares "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

He goes to the priests, who were just as much under that satanic power as he was. He gives them his confession. He has betrayed guiltless blood. That much at least he acknowledges. Then he hanged himself. This is the way Satan uses his victims. He deceives; he is a master in reasoning in a subtle way. He leads on and on, deeper and deeper and when the sin is committed he leads into despair and drags his victim down with himself into the place, which is prepared for him and his angels. Oh, what grace and blessing, to be delivered from the power of darkness, from that awful master. Judas after committing suicide went to his place (Acts i:25). The view given out by some teachers that Judas will come out of his place, to which he departed, and that he will be the final Anti-christ, the man of sin, is highly fanciful; one does well to beware of such views.

The silver pieces he cast into the temple and the priests, as covetous as Judas, stoop down to pick them up. That which follows is only reported in this Gospel, in the other Gospel records no mention is made of the fate of Judas. It is put only in the Gospel of Matthew on account of its dispensational bearing. The priests judge very religiously that it is not lawful to put the money into the Corban, the treasury of the temple. They decide to buy with the pieces of silver, the field of the potter for a burying ground for strangers. This was in partial fulfillment of what was spoken by Jeremias. The full prophecy is found in Zechariah, but the Spirit calls here attention to what is also spoken by Jeremias. We read in that book (Chapers xvii and xix) of a potter's field, which was situated on the side of the valley of Hinnom. That valley is also called "Tophet", a fearful type with its awful memories of Gehenna. Perhaps there, Judas had ended his

earthly existence, and after hanging himself had fallen down, and burst asunder. This potter's field was bought with the blood money.

"By a fiction of law the money was still considered to be Judas', and to have been applied by him in the purchase of that potter's field, for the charitable purpose of burying in it strangers. But from henceforth the name of potter's field, became popularly changed into that of "field of blood." And yet it was the act of Israel through its leaders. It was all theirs, though they would have fain made it all Judas': the valuing, the selling and the purchasing. And "the potter's field", the very spot on which Jeremiah had been divinely directed to prophecy against Jerusalem and against Israel, how was it now all fulfilled in the light of the completed sin and apostasy of the people, as prophetically described by Zechariah! This Tophet of Jeremiah, now that they had valued and sold at thirty shekels Israel's Messiah-Shepherd—truly a Tophet, and become a field of blood! Surely not an accidental coincidence this, that it should be the place of Jeremiah's announcement of judgment, not accidental, but veritably a fulfillment of this prophecy.*

Prophetically all is a foreshadowing of what was to happen to Israel and Israel's land on account of the bloodguiltiness, which they took upon themselves. Israel's land becoming "a burying place for strangers" and Israel scattered among the nations, finding their graves in *Haqal Dama,* a field of blood.

We see Him now before Pilate, the Gentile governor, where He was to be condemned to die; the Jews had no power and right to execute any one. First He was condemned by the Jews and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, who also condemned Him. The crowning sin of the world was there-

*Edersheim Life and Times of the Messiah.

fore committed by both, the Jews and the Gentiles. Israel's long promised Messiah and King was delivered by His own people into the hands of the Roman governor, the Gentile power, which was oppressing them. The charge which the leaders of the nation had brought against the Lord before Pilate was the charge of being a rebel; one who made himself king in opposition to the Roman authority. An immense multitude of people must have followed Him to the Praetorium. The governor questions Him without delay, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" The answer comes at once from his lips "Thou sayest." How brief and full of dignity! Then the accusation of the chief priests and elders began. One after the other spoke. They accused Him urgently, we read in the Gospel of Mark. Perhaps one tried to outdo the other in slandering Him and speaking malicious lies about Him. The Holy Spirit has not given us the detailed accusations they brought against Him; they all were undoubtedly of a political nature. But there He stood, the lamb of God and opened not His mouth. How calm He was in that Babel of voices. There was no need for Him to defend Himself against these unjust accusations. And the Gentile governor, the sharp, worldly, Roman politician wonders at that strange behaviour. Many a time accused criminals had been brought before him and he had witnessed their eagerness in defending themselves. Here stands one in his presence, who does not open His mouth. Nor does He say another word to Pilate after he had questioned him, so that Pilate wondered exceedingly. Such a prisoner had never been before him. He knew he was guiltless.

They had a custom, for how long we do not know, that on the feast the Roman governor would liberate a great criminal, under condemnation. As we read in the Gospel of Mark, the multitude began crying out and to beg, that he would do to

them as he had always done. One notable criminal was at that time in custody; his name was Barabbas. Significant name! Translated it means "the son of the father." The old Syriac version adds another name, the very name which our Lord bore on the earth, the name of Jesus. "Jesus Barabbas"—a miserable, satanic counterfeit of the true "Son of the Father." Who was he? He was an insurgent and had committed murder. May he not have been a false Messiah, one of these satanic instruments, who attempted to become leaders? It is not unreasonable to believe this; in all probability he was just such a character.

"Pilate said to them, whom will ye that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that they had delivered Him up through envy." What a scene! Barabbas still in prison, the guilty one; and here before a great multitude of people, among them the elders and the priests, moving around and whispering their satanic council in the ears of the people, there stands securely bound the Holy One, the blessed Lord, in His solemn silence. But ere the question is answered something else happens. We see a messenger coming in haste towards the seat which the governor occupies. He carries an important message, which Pilate has to see at once. The message was from his wife.

"But, as he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with this righteous man; for I have suffered to-day many things in a dream, because of Him" (verse 19). It was a solemn warning aimed at the conscience of the superstitious Roman. He knew the victim was without guilt. God in His mercy gave the Gentile a warning. He heeded it not.

The pause, which had come in was well used by the chief priests and the elders for they went among the multitudes and

persuaded them that they should beg for Barabbas and to destroy Jesus. Fearful deed it was!

And now he puts the important question: "Which of the two will ye that I release unto you?" It does not take long to bring forth the answer. Barabbas is the people's choice. Barabbas! Barabbas! Not a voice was heard for the Lord. Where were now the multitudes who had followed Him? Where they who had cried "Hosanna"? If one of them was present they kept silent for fear of the wicked leaders. But Pilate convinced of the awful choice, which had been made, against the authority which he had, makes another attempt: "What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?" What a solemn question it was; and it is so still. The question was answered there and it must also be answered by every person to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is offered. He must either be accepted as Saviour and Lord or rejected. The choice decides the eternal destiny; those who accept Him and own Him as their Saviour are saved and all who reject Him as Son of God and Saviour are lost. Pilate's second question is answered by a great cry, that fearful cry: "Let Him be crucified." Again Pilate asks: "What evil then has He done?" But his voice is drowned in a greater demand: "Let Him be crucified." Pilate was fully convinced of the innocence of the silent victim before him, but miserable coward he was, he would not act. When he saw he availed nothing and a great tumult was rising, he took water, washed his hands before the crowd and said: "I am guiltless of the blood of this righteous one, see ye to it." A Roman ceremony this was not, but we think rather that he borrowed it from the Jews themselves. Deut. xxi:6; 2 Sam. iii:28; Psal. xxvi:6 at least refer to what he did here. Pilate with his "See ye to it" casts the bloodguiltiness upon the Jews. The chief priests and elders

had used almost the same phrase in speaking to Judas: "See thou to it," they had said. And what did they answer to the governor's action and "see ye to it" his word to them? And all the people answering said, "His blood be on us and our children. Then he released unto them Barabbas; but Jesus, having scourged Him, he delivered up that He might be crucified."

Terrible answer it was. Barabbas is the nation's choice and the blood of the Holy One is wished by them upon their heads and the heads of their children. Has that awful wish been granted? Let the history of the Jews answer down to the present day. How His blood came upon them and their children; the end is not yet. Barabbas has been their choice and there is still that false Christ to come, who comes in his own name and whom they will receive.

Delivered up to be crucified. The Holy One is now in the hands of cruel, wicked men and all the suffering, shame and cruelty sinful man energized by Satan is capable of inflicting was heaped upon the king, the Lord of Glory. Who could describe that scene, which is before us? Painters have attempted to picture the terrible ordeal on canvas. Recently Tissot has produced pictures, which the world calls "realistic" of great artistic value. Miserable, blasphemous works they are indeed, the imaginations of the human mind. What was done to Him and what He suffered in our stead no brush, no pen, no tongue can tell. The hands tied, the back bent, the cruel scourge of cruel Rome fell upon the Son of God. Satanic hatred against the Holy One supplied the strength to inflict that awful punishment, which Roman writers called "the intermediated death" preceding death by crucifixion. At last that Holy body was a mass of torn and bleeding flesh.

Then the wicked Gentile soldiers began their mockery.

"Then the soldiers of the governor, having taken Jesus with them to the praetorium, gathered against Him the whole band, and having taken off His garment, put on Him a scarlet cloak, and having woven a crown of thorns they put it on His head; and a reed in His right hand; and bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And having spit upon Him, they took the reed and beat Him upon His head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the cloak off Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified" (verses 27-31).

A whole cohort of rough, barbaric soldiers are now taking hold of the willing victim. After that terrible scourging, the most awful indignities were heaped upon Him. First they tore His clothes from His outraged body, most likely in eager haste to have their sport with Him. Then they cast a scarlet cloak on Him. That garment was worn by kings, and the scarlet color was produced by the *coccus cacti*, the crushed insect. Then they wove a crown of thorns and put it on His blessed Head. The crown must have been put upon Him by these instruments of Satan, to inflict pain and to ridicule Him. The crown of thorns also points us back to the garden in which the first man fell. Thorns became the witnesses of the curse, as they are still in nature. The second Man, the Holy One, takes the curse upon His own head. They put a reed, a weak, perishable reed in His hand, the hand which upholds all things, the hand which had been outstretched in blessing over the weak, the erring, the sick. the blind and which had touched the leper; that mighty hand holds the reed, a scepter of mockery. And then the satanic drama of mockery and ridicule is complete. One after the other, these wicked men come and bow the knee before Him, they mock Him. "Oh Joy!

or, Rejoice! King of the Jews." This was their greeting. But they get up from their position and spit upon Him and take the reed and beat Him on His head.

What a scene for us to contemplate! Who can measure its depths! The Son of God, He who came from the bosom of the Father, the Only Begotten, whose Glory Isaiah had seen, insulted, outraged, spit upon trampled upon by His vile creatures. And oh! reader, it was our sin which did it. How affecting to our hearts it should be and indeed it is. How He did love us to give Himself to such shame and suffering.

In that hour it was fulfilled what His Spirit had predicted of His suffering. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off my hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 1:6). And through it all He opened not His mouth. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah liii:7).

And as we gaze upon this scene once more we behold His Glory as well. The scene of His shame and rejection, of mockery and suffering is prophetic of His exaltation and Glory.

He is the King in Glory; the King of kings and Lord of lords. The royal garment is His. The crown of thorns gives way to the many crowns which His brow will wear. The scepter is His. Every knee must bow before Him and every tongue confess Him Lord, to the praise of God the Father. The highest Glory He reached through suffering, the crown through the cross, because He loved such as we are; because God wants us to be with Him in all eternity. Oh! glorious, blessed Gospel, how sweet to our hearts!

Thy holy head, once bound with thorns,
The crown of glory now adorns;
Thy seat, the Father's throne;
O Lord, e'en now we sing Thy praise,
Ours the eternal song to raise—
Worthy the Lord alone!

As Head for us Thou sittest there,
Until Thy members too shall share
In all Thou dost receive:
Thy glory and Thy royal throne
Thy boundless love has made our own
Who in Thy name believe.

We triumph in Thy triumphs, Lord;
Thy joys our deepest joys afford,
The fruit of love divine.
While sorrow'ng, suff'ring, toiling here
How does the thought our spirits cheer
The throne of glory's Thine."

And now they led Him away that He should be crucified. "Once more was He unrobed and robed. The purple robe was torn from His bleeding body, the crown of thorns from His bleeding brow. Arrayed again in His own, now blood stained, garments, He was led forth to execution. Only about two hours and a half had passed since the time that He had first stood before Pilate (about half-past six), when the melancholy procession reached Golgotha (at nine A. M.)."*

"And as they went forth they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to go with them that he might bear His cross. And having come to a place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull, they gave Him to

*Edersheim.

drink vinegar mingled with gall; and having tasted it He would not drink" (verses 32-35).

Physical weakness made it necessary that one should carry His cross. Was there ever such a procession seen before! The Lamb of God led forth to suffer outside of the camp! Oh, the man of sorrows, how He must have looked when they dragged Him to the place of death! But though He did not carry the cross and was weakened, yet He could not succumb at this point. The soldiers had led forth, no doubt, many a one to a similar death. Perhaps some died before the nails could be driven through the hands and feet. Did they fear that this might be the case with Him, whom they had maltreated, dishonored and mocked? Or was it mercy, which offered Him vinegar mingled with gall? Mercy, we believe it was not. It was a stimulant which they offered Him. They knew not that the Life which was in their hands could not succumb; no one could take that life from Him. He would not drink what was given to Him; He did not seek relief, He did not need it. His loving will was to endure all the suffering in perfect consciousness. But there is a prophecy that He should drink vinegar and gall in His suffering (Psalm lxix). When the right moment had come for the fulfillment of that prophecy, He said, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "I thirst." Then He drank. Before the crucifixion He refused the vinegar and the gall. Golgotha, the place where they took Him, must have been to the north of Jerusalem. It was outside of the gate near gardens, in which were tombs.

Here they crucified Him. No description of the act itself is given in any of the Gospels. Crucifixion was the most horrible torturing mode of putting criminals to death; it originated in Phoenicia and was adopted by the Roman

government. The Jews themselves knew nothing of putting transgressors to death by the cross. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit does not describe the awful act, the nailing of the Lord to the cross, we shall not attempt it. Lifted up, His hands and feet pierced by nails, every muscle stretched and life's blood pouring out, He hung on the cross, suffering the unspeakable tortures of such a death.

Prophecy is now being fulfilled. All the predictions of His sufferings come true. That what was foreshadowed in the different offerings and sacrifices, is now beheld in its deep and awful reality. The heavenly Isaac is upon the altar and the hand of God about to smite Him; there is no deliverance from the cup, He drinks it to the last drop.

The xxii Psalm, that great prophecy concerning the sin-bearer, comes first of all into view. "They parted His clothes amongst themselves, casting lots." This was foretold by David (Psalm xxii:18). It is said that the division of the garments of the victims was a Roman custom. But there is a deeper significance than a mere fulfillment of a prophecy. His enemies, those who nailed Him to the cross, received His clothes. And so for His naked creature He has provided the robe of righteousness by His death on the cross.

In the next place the superscription is mentioned. "And they set over His head His accusation written: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." A board on which the crime of the condemned was written was generally carried before the criminal, who was led forth to the place of execution through the crowded streets. This custom was most likely followed with our Lord. Pilate himself had the superscription drawn up and it was written in three languages: Latin, Greek and the Aramaean dialect of Hebrew. We can not follow here the report of the different Gospel records about

the writing above the cross. The one here in Matthew was undoubtedly the Latin inscription, while the fullest, as reported by John "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" was written in Aramean and the one in Mark "The King of the Jews" is the Greek inscription. Pilate could not help himself, he had to write as he did, though he may have had the thought in mind to avenge himself and to mock the Jews. In spite of the hating Jews He received His true title and that from the Gentile. There it stood written and could not be changed; so it is still. Jesus of Nazareth, the despised, the rejected One, is the King of the Jews, one of His titles; the throne of His Father David is His and in the wider sense He will be the King of kings.

"Then are crucified with Him two robbers, one on the right hand and one on the left." Another fulfillment of Scripture. "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah liii:12).

"But the passers-by reviled Him, shaking their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou art the Son of God, descend from the cross. And in like manner the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and the elders, said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let Him descend from the cross, and we will believe on Him. He trusted upon God, let Him save Him now if He will have Him. For He said, I am Son of God. And the robbers also who had been crucified with Him cast the same reproaches on Him" (verses 43-44).

We behold still deeper sufferings of the Holy One. We listen again to the voice of prophecy. "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm lxix:20). There is none to

pity in the scene before us. He is alone cruelly mocked and He must have felt the reproach as only one who is absolutely holy could have felt it. He was reviled but He reviled not again. Our Gospel does not report a single word coming from His lips. From the Gospel of Luke we learn that the first word He had spoken after He had been lifted up, was that wonderful prayer "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." He is silent to the cruel and vile mockeries, born in the pit, the very breath of Satan. The old accusation is once more held up against Him. Little they knew that they were fulfilling that very Word about destroying the temple and that the third day, when He would arise as the mighty victor was not far hence.

But it was not only the rabble of the street, the low down element, the uncultured mob which mocked Him, but the chief priests, the elders had gone out to help in reproaching Him. They had come to deride Him in His agony. What awful depravity this reveals. It is astonishing to see that these cultured religionists in their fearful blindness quoted Scripture, when they gazed upon Him. They had said, "He is King of Israel; let Him descend now from the cross, and we will believe on Him." The great King of Israel, David, had written by the Spirit that great prophetic psalm of the suffering One, the Twenty-second. They knew that Psalm well. The ancient synagogue even had given this Psalm a Messianic interpretation. The sufferer there in that Psalm cries out, "But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." They gazed upon this great suffering One. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head." They saw the laughing throng, the cruelly mocking crowds, and they themselves joined in. But there

is more than that. The wicked enemies of the great sufferer speak in that Psalm. The very words they were to utter in the presence of the forsaken sufferer, the words with which they were to revile Him are given. "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." (Verse 8.) These very words the sneering chief priests, elders and scribes uttered before the cross. What awful blindness had come upon them! But more solemn still and full of meaning are the words they also said. "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." How true, He saved others. And what a confession from their lips that He did save others. They owned His divine power and yet they rejected Him. He could not save Himself, for He would not. He had come to save others, and that could only be accomplished by taking the place of those He came to save. He had to die on the cross; Himself He could not save.

The robbers, too, cast the same reproaches on Him. The one, indeed, becomes ere he dies the mighty trophy of His Grace and hears from the blessed Lord that marvelous word, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." As this incident does not belong into this Gospel we pass it by.

The deepest agony has not yet been reached. Awful as the physical and mental sufferings of the Son of God must have been, there was still greater suffering before Him, a suffering before which all the other sufferings pale. Up to this point He had suffered from wicked men, energized by the devil. But now He is approaching the moment when He who knew no sin is to be made sin, when, instead of suffering from men, He is to suffer from God Himself. The cup from which His holy Being shrank He takes now to drink to the last drop.

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the

whole land until the ninth hour; but about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (verses 45-47).

A solemn darkness settled over the whole land. Was it a darkness which covered the entire earth? Hardly, for in a part of the world it was night and darkness was not possible. No doubt the darkness covered the entire land and perhaps the entire Roman world. It enshrouded the cross with the great sufferer so that He was no longer visible to those who kept guard and those who looked on. That it was not an eclipse of the sun is learned from the fact that it was full moon at that time. It was a supernatural darkness. At the termination of the darkness about the ninth hour we hear His voice out of the darkness. About the ninth hour He cried, not in feebleness, but with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" But what is the meaning of this darkness? It was the outer sign of what passed over Him, who was then the sinner's substitute before a holy and righteous God. God had hidden His face from Him; He was forsaken by God Himself. His cry explains the meaning of the darkness, and the darkness gives us the meaning of His bitter cry. God had turned from Him, left Him, who had taken the sinner's place. He then bore our sins, was made sin for us and was the offering for sin. But who can fathom it? Who can understand the deep mystery, the deep suffering when the holy and righteous God dealt with sin in Him, who had no sin, but who was made sin?

"He was alone with God, made sin; nothing to turn aside the cup of justice; nothing to deaden it. The power which was in Him did not shelter Him; it rendered Him capable of bearing that which weighed on His soul, the feeling of

the horror of the curse in the measure in which the love of the Father was familiar to Him, the feeling of that which it was to be made sin in the measure of the divine holiness which was in Him. Neither the one nor the other could be measured. He drank then the cup of judgment of God against sin. All forces Him to utter the cry, a cry which we are allowed to hear that we might know what passed there, the reality of atonement: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' It is a forsaking which none can fathom, save He who felt it."*

Oh the blessed mystery of what transpired then in those three hours of darkness! It is true we cannot fathom it. We cannot know what it cost to make reconciliation, but we know the great work was done. The just died for the unjust that He might bring us to God. All done for us that God might be just and the justifier of him, who believes in Jesus. "And some of those who stood there, when they heard it said, This man calls for Elias. And immediately one of them running and getting a sponge, having filled it with vinegar and fixed it on a reed, gave Him to drink. But the rest said, Let be; let us see if Elias comes to save Him" (v. 47-50). Who were those who said, This man calls for Elias? It is generally assumed that they were some of the soldiers. They knew perhaps little of Hebrew, it is said, and mistook the word "Eli" My God, for Elias. But against this it must be said that they equally knew little or nothing of Elias. We think rather the persons were mocking Jews, who understood the words and made them the occasion of new mockery. At this time it happened what is more fully recorded in the Gospel of John. "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, says, I thirst." Then they gave

*John N. Darby.

Him to drink after which He gave up the spirit. The work was done in the three hours of darkness. After that little unfulfilled Scripture is fulfilled at the right time He said, "It is finished."

But here in our Gospel we read "And Jesus having cried again with a loud voice dismissed His spirit." It is significant that twice we read of His loud voice. There was no sign and evidence of exhaustion. His life was not taken from Him but He gave His life; He laid it down Himself. The King Himself, when the moment had come, dismissed His spirit. And now we behold a three-fold result of His death. The veil in the temple was rent. The earth was shaken, and the tombs were opened and the centurion made his confession as well as those who were with him.

"And lo, the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to the bottom, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints fallen asleep arose, and, going out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered into the holy city and appeared unto many. But the centurion, and they that were with him on guard over Jesus, seeing the earthquake and the things that took place, feared greatly, saying, Truly this man was Son of God" (verses 51-54).

The rent veil is the first event following the death of the Lord. The veil was the inner one of the temple, dividing the holy of holies from the holy part. It was not an earthquake, which rent this heavy veil, but the power of God. It was done from above and not from below, "from top to bottom." It must have happened just about the time when the priests entered the holy part at the evening sacrifice. What terror must have seized these officiating priests when they beheld that unseen hand throwing open the most holy place. It has been suggested that this miracle was responsible that

so many priests became converted in Jerusalem. For we read in the Book of Acts "and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts vi:7). The veil itself was the sign that man was barred from coming to God; that heavy, solid veil, ever gave that testimony that it is impossible for man to approach God. The rent veil shows that it has been made possible. The rent veil declares that the great sacrifice on the cross of the spotless Lamb of God has been accepted. It is the first great answer of God to the majestic word of the dying Saviour, "It is finished." It likewise shows that the Jewish ceremonial law is fulfilled and ended. Most beautiful and uplifting is that inspired reference to this great event in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of Hope without wavering; for He is the faithful that promised" (Heb. x:19-23).

In the next place the earth was shaken, the rocks were rent, and the tombs opened. This statement is peculiar to Matthew; we do not find it in the other Gospel records. The death of the King shook the earth and rent the rocks. The opened tombs declared the glorious news, that His death hath broken the bands of death forever; through death He destroyed him, that had the power of death, the devil (Heb. ii:14). The interpretation that the rocks were rent and the graves opened, because the Lord in spirit descended into hades, we reject as unscriptural and fanciful, leading towards more serious errors. The Lord did not descend into hades; He went to paradise.

But besides this great sign, showing the captivity led captive, the power of death destroyed by His death, we read something else. "Many bodies of the saints fallen asleep arose, and going out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered into the holy city and appeared to many." The reader notices that the resurrection of the bodies of these saints did not take place immediately after the Lord had dismissed His spirit. They came forth *after* His resurrection. They could not precede Him. He is the first fruits, and these saints could not rise till He was risen on the third day. But why is it mentioned here and not in the next chapter in connection with His own resurrection? It belongs there historically. It is put here by the Holy Spirit to show the effect of the great work accomplished on the cross, the efficacy of the death of our Saviour. Death is now to be swallowed up in victory. "Where O death is thy sting? Where O death thy victory? Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin the law. But thanks to God, who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinth xv:55-57). By His death the great work of deliverance has been accomplished, and this makes resurrection possible. The rising of the bodies of these saints is a solemn and glorious anticipation of the first resurrection, soon to come. These risen Saints, who came forth after He had left the grave, entered actually in the holy city and appeared to many. It was another mighty, supernatural witness of what had been wrought. But one might ask many questions in connection with this event. Who were they? What became of them? Where are they now? To whom did they appear and for what purpose? These questions and similar ones are unanswerable. It is useless to speculate about it. It is well in these days to abide very close to the written Word.

And the third event, the confession of the Saviour as Son of God by the centurion and the company of soldiers under him. In Luke and Mark we find the centurion mentioned alone, but here it is the entire company. They were Gentiles, heathen. The earthquake, the darkness, the loud voice which had spoken from the cross, all had filled these poor pagans with fear and from their lips, gazing up to the cross where He had bowed His adorable head, came the confession "Son of God." No such word came from Jewish lips. What a prophetic foreshadowing again. The Gentiles were to believe on Him. That for which they had condemned them and delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles is confessed by those who had put Him to death.

The work was finished, and God made it impossible that any other indignities could be put upon Him, whose body could not see corruption. It was customary to leave the bodies of the crucified hanging on the cross, the prey of wild birds. What happened about the breaking of the bones and the spear thrust is not recorded in our Gospel, but is fully made known in the Gospel of John. We mention it, therefore, briefly without attempting an exposition. "The Jews, therefore, that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for it was the preparation, for the day of that Sabbath was a great day, demanded of Pilate that their legs might be broken and they taken away." Had they succeeded, instruments of Satan as they were, the Scriptures would have been broken. But what happened? "The soldiers, therefore, came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that had been crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who saw it bears witness, and his witness is

true, that ye also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Not a bone of Him shall be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (John xix:32-37).

Then there were many women who witnessed the sufferings of the second man how He bore the curse. They gazed upon Him from afar (verses 55-56).

"Now when even was come a rich man of Arimathea, his name Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus. He going to Pilate begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given up. And Joseph having got the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn in the rock; and having rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, went away. But Mary of Magdala was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the sepulchre" (verses 57-61).

Who was this Joseph of Arimathea? A wealthy man of the Jews and a secret disciple of the Lord Jesus. He was an honorable councillor, belonging to the Sanhedrim, who also himself was awaiting the kingdom of God (Mark xv:43). He was a good man and just. When the Sanhedrim had come together to condemn the Holy One Joseph of Arimathea had not assented to their counsel and deed (Luke xxiii:51). Fear of the Jews had kept his discipleship in the background, but now when the Lord had expired on the cross, and after the mighty events, which had taken place, he comes boldly to the front. His fear became a holy boldness. During the earthly life of the Lord, though he knew Him and believed on Him, fear kept him back from avowing openly his discipleship; but now as His Lord had died He makes His great confession of Him before the Jews, the Sanhedrim and the Gentiles as well. He went right to Pilate. This person had the authority to dispose of the

bodies of the crucified. Generally they were, after all dishonor had been done to them, thrown in the malefactors' graves. He then begged for the body of Jesus, and Pilate consented readily and gave his permission. The death of Christ had made a deep impression upon the Roman governor. That Jesus should have died so soon was a great amazement to Pilate. He called for the centurion to get the details from him and perhaps that official gave him his conviction that the crucified One was Son of God (Mark xv: 44). And now to the astonishment of Pilate the well known, prominent and wealthy Joseph comes and begs for the body to do Him honor. How it must have disturbed the coward and troubled his conscience. But another one was there, too. That One helped in the hasty preparation for the burial. "And Nicodemus also, who at first came to Jesus by night, came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. They took, therefore, the body of Jesus and bound it up in linen with the spices, as it is the custom with the Jews to prepare for burial" (John xix:39-40). Nicodemus was a very timid man by nature. How he came to the Lord by night for fear of the Jews is well known. From His own lips he heard the blessed truth, the words of life. The precious seed had been sown in his heart. Did it spring up? He also belonged to the council. When the officers returned, having been sent to capture the Lord and they gave their report, Nicodemus, the great acknowledged teacher in Israel ventured a weak defense of the Lord (John vii:50-53). It showed the seed working. But the death of Christ brought him and Joseph of Arimathea deliverance from the fear of men; light and liberty flashed in their souls as the result of the death of Christ. The Lord had said to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up a serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted

up, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." He had been lifted up and Nicodemus believing, confessed Him.

What honor then was done to the Lord. Wrapped in a clean linen sheet, after He had been lifted from the cross and then the resting place for Him, who had finished the work the Father gave Him to do, a new tomb hewn in the rock. It was a fulfillment of Isaiah liii:9. It is unfortunate that the authorized version gives us such a poor translation of this verse. Literally translated it is "And men appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence, neither was there guile in His mouth." The authorized version "He made His grave with the wicked" is wrong. The enemy would cast His body to the place where the bodies of the wicked were cast, but the power of God made that impossible.

The great stone is rolled to the door of the tomb. Joseph and Nicodemus depart. Only Mary of Magdala and the other Mary keep their love watch opposite the sepulchre. Thus closed the greatest day in the history of the world, the day on which the Prince of life, the Lord of Glory died on the cross of Golgotha, when the great work of reconciliation had been accomplished and peace was made in the blood of His cross.

That which follows in the chapter is peculiar to Matthew. None of the other Gospels have it. It is indeed the proper place for it.

'Now on the morrow, which is after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we have called to mind that that deceiver said when He was still alive, after three days I arise. Command therefore that the sepulchre be secured until the third day, lest His disciples should come and steal Him away, and say

to the people He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worst than the first. And Pilate said to them, Ye have a watch; go, secure it as well as ye know how. And they went and secured the sepulchre, having sealed the stone with the watch besides" (verses 62-66).

But little comment on this striking incident is necessary. The enemy is at work to make all secure, but instead of it he only makes his own defeat complete, and the wrath of the enemy is made to praise Him. They remembered suddenly the words of the Lord, showing how they had watched His utterances. The disciples to whom He had said so often that He would rise on the third day, had forgotten all about it. It did not enter into their minds. This is proven by the way they took the news of His resurrection. It was a forgetfulness, no doubt, produced by the Spirit of God; in this very fact lies a strong argument for the resurrection of the Lord. Their imaginations could not produce, as infidelity has claimed, a supposed appearing of the One who had died. But the enemy remembered. Yet could they really fear that His disciples would steal His body? The disciples had been scattered like sheep. Poor Peter, where was he? They had fled. Would the feeble women roll the stone away and steal His body? Could they think that fraud and deception might be practiced? It was the bad conscience which made them fear. Pilate made no objections; he let them have their desire. The stone is sealed, the guard is placed there to make fraud and illusion an impossibility. Little did they know that they were working to make the fact of the glorious resurrection of the Son of God secure beyond controversy. They furnished one of the strongest proofs for that event, thus becoming involuntary witnesses of His resurrection.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

We have reached the last portion of our Gospel. The end is brief and very abrupt. The account of the resurrection of the Lord as given by Matthew is the briefest of all the Gospels. Only a few of the facts are mentioned. Then the characteristic feature of this last chapter is that no mention is made of the ascension of the Lord. However, the fact of His ascension is implied in numerous places in the Gospel. In the Gospel of Mark we find the statement that He was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. In Luke we read that He was "carried into heaven," but in Matthew no such statement is made. The Gospel ends as if He were still on the earth, all power in heaven and on earth in His hands and with His own to the completion of the age. All this is in perfect harmony with the scope of the Gospel.

In giving a brief exposition of this last chapter we shall not consider the different accounts of the resurrection, nor shall we attempt to harmonize the different manifestations of the risen Christ or to give the order of these. All this is beyond the work we have undertaken. We confine ourselves to the account as given here.

The chapter contains three parts. First, we find a brief account of the resurrection and the manifestation of Christ to the women. In the second place we find an account, which, like the last paragraph of the previous chapter, is peculiar to Matthew, the lying report invented by the Jews. Lastly, we see the disciples gathered in Galilee and He gives them His great commission, declares His power in heaven

and on earth and assures them of His presence with them, even unto the end of the age. This is the last vision of the King in the Gospel of Matthew.

"Now late on Sabbath, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, came Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to look at the sepulchre." This is the brief introduction to the scene which follows. With the many women the two Marys had looked on the awful crucifixion scene. How they must have suffered in these hours of the agony of Him whom they loved. Then we beheld them sitting opposite the sepulchre. And now after others had gone and were taking a physical rest they could not stay away; they overcame all fear and went out to the sepulchre once more. The wording of the first verse is peculiar. Another translation reads, "And late in the week, when it was on the point of dawning into the first of the week came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary to view the sepulchre."* Some have thought of two visits these women made, one on the evening and the other in the early morning. This is not probable. The dawning of the first day of the week is the time marked out. The first day of the week began after sundown on the Sabbath. It is quite correct to translate "after the Sabbath." To this agree the other records.

"And behold there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending out of heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his look was as lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became as dead men" (verses 2-4). The great earthquake was occasioned by the descending angel and the stone, so securely sealed, was rolled away and the heavenly messenger took his seat upon it. However, the resurrection of the Lord did not take place when the earth-

*Rotherham.

quake happened and when the stone was rolled away. Paintings often help along this unscriptural conception. No angel was needed to open the way for Him from the tomb. God raised Him from the dead and He Himself arose. The stone was rolled away to show that the tomb was empty. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was God's mighty and glorious seal upon the atoning work accomplished on the cross. It was God's answer to His strong crying and tears (Heb. v:7). The women no doubt felt the earthquake and may have seen that flash of light from above.

We have the effect of what happened upon the soldiers first, in the next place upon the women, and, lastly, upon the Jews. Three classes are seen in connection with the resurrection of the Lord in Matthew. The soldiers represent unbelieving Gentiles, the women, believers and then the Jews. The solders are terror-stricken. They were lying around on the ground as if they were dead. It is the effect upon the natural man of God's power made known. On what greater scale this will be repeated when He comes again in resurrection Glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The trembling soldiers are left for the present. We shall hear of them later. The women are now addressed by the angel. They, too, must have made an outcry for the angel "answered them."

"And the angel answering said to the women, Fear not ye, I know that ye seek Jesus, the crucified One. He is not here, for He is risen as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and say to the disciples that He is risen from the dead; and Behold He goes before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him. Behold I have told you."

What a glorious message it was. The crucified One risen from the dead! Mary of Magdala is in the foreground.

Out of her the Lord had driven seven demons. She and the other Mary take the place of a Miriam and Deborah in the Old Testament. They are to herald and celebrate the mighty victory over sin, death and the devil which had been won. They hear the good news first and are the publishers of the same. As in the beginning of the Gospel, in the genealogy of the King, women are prominently mentioned, so in the closing scenes, in the triumph of the King, they have the lead.

"Fear not ye" is the message of the angel to the women. This, indeed, is the good news from the empty tomb. There is no cause to fear, absolutely none, for those who have believed on the Lord and are His own. All darkness, all uncertainty, all doubt and fear are at an end. The whole sin question has been righteously dealt with. The empty tomb, the glorious victory over death, and the grave are the everlasting witnesses. Gazing on this empty tomb, hearing that angelic message "He is risen" faith breaks forth in that song of triumph, penned by the Holy Spirit in Romans viii. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him give us all things? Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is he that condemns? It is Christ who has died, but rather has been also raised up; who is also at the right hand of God; who also intercedes for us." God is for us; He gave His Son; Christ died for us and God raised Him from the dead. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; He was buried, He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinth. xv:3-4). Thanks be unto God for His blessed Gospel.

But we must refrain from following the blessed doctrine

of resurrection. If we were teaching this great doctrine we would have to follow the revelations as given in the Epistles. This is not our purpose. We are following only a partial historical account of the event itself.

The angel directs the women to bear the good news to the disciples and assures them the risen One Himself would go before them to Galilee, and there the disciples would see Him. This appointment was according to His own word. We find it in chapter xxvi:32. It is peculiar to Matthew and as we shall see later of no little importance.

"And going out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to bring His disciples word behold, also, Jesus met them, saying, Hail! And they coming up took Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus says to them, Fear not; go, bring word to my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me" (verses 8-10).

This tells us that they had entered into the empty tomb and had looked upon the place His blessed Body had rested. They must have trembled in great excitement; but greater still was their joy. The angel's message had at last brought back the remembrance of the words of the Lord about His resurrection on the third day. They ran, therefore, to bring the news to the disciples. And as they hastened on, eager to carry out the command, behold Jesus met them and greeted them with the word *Chairete* "Oh! the Joy" or "Rejoice!" He was full of joy and graciously He revealed Himself to these devoted women. But oh, the joy! when at last His own are all with Him. Worshippingly they fall at His feet, while He Himself assures them "Fear not!" and repeats the message of the angel, "Bring word to my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me."

All this is very tersely told. In the Gospel of John we find

the fuller account of the Lord's manifestation to Mary (John xx:11-18). It is often said by those who do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures that there is a discrepancy between Matthew and John. In Matthew they fall at His feet and worship Him, but in John's Gospel the Lord says to Mary "Touch me not." There is no difficulty here at all. She fell at His feet and touched them, and laying hold of them the Lord uttered the words which are found in the Gospel of John. The taking hold by the feet is reported in the Gospel of Matthew, and the words He spake in the Gospel of John. This is one of the beautiful evidences of the divine authorship of the Gospel records. In our Gospel Christ is seen in relation to Israel. He is the risen Messiah in connection with His believing remnant. Well can she claim Him and take hold of His feet. As the women fell at His feet and worshipped Him, so His earthly people will at some day worship the Lord and own Him as the Messiah. But in John it is the heavenly side. He is to ascend, to go away, leaving the earth and going on high; His bodily presence on the earth in relation to Israel is not the revelation found in the fourth Gospel. Then the Lord calls His own "Brethren." In the Gospel of John we find the same command. Never before did the Lord call His disciples "brethren," but on that glorious resurrection morning He uses this expression. It is now fully manifested that " He that sanctifieth and they are sanctified are all of one; therefore He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii:11-12). The word itself is mentioned in xxii Psalm. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" (verse 22). That Psalm, containing the great prophecy of the suffering and exaltation of Christ, is prominent in the closing scenes of Matthew. We saw the fulfillment of the sufferings on the cross and here the prediction which relates to His resurrection. The main

thing, however, insisted upon in the resurrection account in Matthew is Galilee. The disciples are told to go there; there the Lord will meet them and send them forth on their great mission among the nations. Before we behold them gathered in the mountain, which the Lord had appointed, another scene is introduced.

"And as they went, behold some of the watch went into the city, and brought word to the chief priests of all that had taken place. And having assembled with the elders, and having taken counsel, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers saying, Say that His disciples coming by night stole Him while we were sleeping. And if this should come to the hearing of the governor we will persuade him and save you from all anxiety. And they took the money, and did as they had been taught. And this report is current among the Jews until this day" (verses 11-15).

As previously stated this is peculiar to Matthew and the continuation of the story contained in the last paragraph of chapter xxvii. We learn that the effect of the resurrection of the Lord was a hardening one for the Jews. These wicked men had given thirty pieces of silver to have him delivered into their hands and now they are giving an immense sum to circulate a lie about His resurrection. The watch had sufficiently recovered from their awful fright, and some of them hasten back to the city. Surely something must have happened or why should they leave their important post and return to the city to make a report? Then it is strange that they went to the chief priests first and not to the Roman governor. This was indeed a very irregular proceeding. From this fact we must conclude that in the estimation of these soldiers, that which they had to report, was of greater importance for the chief priests to know than it was for Pilate. Who knows but these priests had instructed

the guard, that if something should happen at the sepulchre and He should come forth, that they were to come to them first of all? This is probable. They bring their report and this was nothing less but a witness of the resurrection and that the tomb is empty. The enemies were the first witnesses of His triumph. The whole Sanhedrim was then hastily summoned to receive the report in an official way. The straightforward statement, as men of a military training are apt to report, made doubt about veracity impossible. The agitation of the guard, their frightened looks, the evidences that they had passed through a terrible experience, substantiated the truth of what they had reported. The Sanhedrim had nothing else left but to accept the report. To impeach these witnesses, to accuse them of falsehoods, would have been insane. There was no doubt in their minds that all had really happened as they reported. An earthquake had taken place, an angel had come down from heaven, the stone was rolled away, the tomb was found empty. What motives could make these soldiers to rush back to the city? Did they not do it at the risk of their own lives? The Sanhedrim was, therefore, in an awful predicament. What would happen, this must have flashed through the minds of these blinded men, if this truth should get out among the people? Perhaps they thought too of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two of their number who had confessed Him by their devoted actions. Then they had thought of the possibility of something to happen with the sepulchre and had the guard placed there. And now the attempt to defeat the resurrection of the Lord had miserably failed. He has risen from the dead. His own words came true. The temple which was destroyed was built again; as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so He was in the heart of the earth. He is risen. The

very guards they had placed before the sepulchre to make any deception impossible bear the witness. Their fine minds, some of them legally trained, saw the hopelessness of their case. One thought was written upon every one of their dark hearts; the truth about the resurrection must be denied. This again could only be accomplished by inventing a lie. The only possible lie was to say that His disciples stole the body. The whole story they invented is, of course, incredible. It is far easier to believe He arose from the dead than to believe what the Jews invented about His resurrection. If His disciples could have stolen the body, if it had been possible, they surely would not have done it. But if they had a desire to steal the body, they could not have done so, for with the guard placed at the tomb, it was an impossibility. The disciples had forgotten all about the resurrection promise; they were a scattered, poor and timid lot of people. But even if they had been anxious to steal the body, how could they have done it? Here was the company of armed men. They were experienced guards and careful watchers, trained in that profession. Then there was the sealed, heavy stone. How could they have rolled away the stone and carried away the body without being detected? Impossible. But the utterly ridiculous side of the whole lie came out with the report which these soldiers were to circulate, being well paid for it by the Sanhedrim. The disciples came and stole the body, while they were sleeping! In the first place, it is incredible that all these men had fallen asleep at the same time. All were fast asleep, so fast asleep that the commotion of rolling away the stone and the carrying away of a dead one did not disturb them. Furthermore, sleeping at a post meant death for the Roman soldier. One might have nodded and thus risked his life, but that all slept is an impossibility. But the report is foolish; they were asleep, and

while they were asleep they witnessed how the disciples stole the body of Jesus. How ridiculous. The whole proceedings were out and out fraud and falsehood. And this was indeed the only statement they could possibly bring against the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a miserable lie. And this lie is continued to the present day. A small volume is still circulated among the Jews, the "Toledoth Jesu" in which the most blasphemous things are said about our blessed Lord, and the lie about His resurrection invented by the Sanhedrim is likewise printed. This lie will be upheld by the unbelieving Jews till the day comes when He appears the second time, and the believing remnant of His earthly people will cry out, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." We might mention here the testimony of Josephus. He says in his antiquities: "He appeared to them alive on the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him."

Indeed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, His physical resurrection is unassailable. How wicked then to deny it or any part of it! Yet this is of common occurrence in these last days.*

And now but a few brief sentences remain with which the Gospel of Matthew closes.

"But the eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, "All power has been given

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*That evil system known by the name of "Millennial Dawnism," or "Russellism," belongs to those movements which introduce damnable heresies in the last days (2 Peter ii). "Millennial Dawnism," among other things, denies the literal, physical resurrection of our Lord.

me in heaven and upon earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age" (verses 16-20).

What mountain it was He had appointed as the meeting place we do not know. Some one has said "Matthew is the Gosepl of the Mountain."†

From a mountain He gave as King His great proclamation, the so-called sermon on the mount, in which He proclaimed the principles of His Kingdom. On a mountain we saw Him transfigured, the blessed type of His second coming in majesty and glory for the establishment of that Kingdom. On the mount of Olives He took the place as Son of David to ride down into Jerusalem. From the same mountain He delivered His great prophetic discourse concerning the future of the Jews, the Christian profession and the nations. And now we see Him and His own on the Galilean mountain. But why is Galilee made so prominent in the last chapter of Matthew?

It is, indeed, a strong and important point in this Gospel. Galilee was the place of His rejection. This is evident in the whole Gospel of Matthew, which gives us exclusively His Galilean ministry. Jerusalem would not have Him. It rejected Him and sought to kill Him through Herod in His infancy. This is only found in Matthew. Therefore, when the King began His ministry He began it in "the Galilee of the nations" (chapter iv). The most ignorant Jews resided in Galilee and they had become mixed with the Gentiles. The scribes despised Galilee and as we know said "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John vii:52).

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†H. G. Weston.

His first appearing there was prophetic. It was a sign that Israel would reject Him and that the people sitting in darkness would behold the great light and that to them which sit in the region and shadow of death, light would spring up (chapter iv:16). Jerusalem did reject Him and, therefore, in this Gospel of the Kingdom, the Kingdom preached and rejected, we see the risen One passing by Jerusalem. He returns to the place of His rejection and His disciples have to go there and meet Him in Galilee. Here on this significant ground He gives them the great commission to proclaim the kingdom world-wide, to disciple all nations and to baptize them.

This is the *Kingdom* commission. In Luke xxiv we have the proper Christian mission. A time is coming when this great commission here will be carried out by a remnant of Jewish disciples, who are represented by the eleven. It is the same remnant as in Matthew xxiv.

We desire to give this fact in the words of another, which will be helpful.*

"It is well to notice what has been alluded to:—the ministry in the Acts is not the accomplishment of this commission in Matthew, but of the mission in Luke, the book itself being, as is known, the continuation of his Gospel; nor was the ministry of Paul, who took up by a separate divine mission the evangelization of the nations, the carrying out of this (the commission here in Matthew). His was fully more even yet a mission from the ascended and glorified Saviour, to which was added the ministry of the church. It connects itself even much more in its first elements with Luke. The ministry here established stands alone. The disciples are not sent to Jews, as in Luke. But Jerusalem is rejected and the remnant is attached to Christ (His brethren and owned

*Collected writings of J. N. D., page 327.

in this character) sent out to Gentiles. This as far as Scripture teaches us has never been fulfilled. The course of events under the hand of God, the disciples remain in Jerusalem. A new mission is sent forth in the person of Paul and that connected with the establishment of the church on earth. The accomplishment of the commission here in Matthew has been interrupted, but there is the promise to be with those who went forth in it to the end of the age. Nor do I doubt it will be so. This testimony will go forth to the nations before the Lord comes. 'The Brethren' will carry it to warn the nations. The commission was given, but we find no accomplishment of it. It connects the testimony with the Jewish remnant owned by a risen Lord of all, with the earth and His earthly directions, and for the present it has in fact given place to a heavenly commission, and the church of God."

How wonderful and harmonious is the Word of God. If anything else had been put at the close of Matthew it would have disturbed and marred the scope of the whole book. Man's wisdom could never have produced such a work.

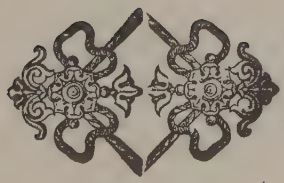
The eleven then saw Him there. Some doubted. How this indeed carried conviction with it of the truthfulness of the report. Most likely they were taken by surprise, beheld Him from a distance; soon all doubts vanished, for He came up and spoke to them.

All power is His; all power in heaven and on earth. Soon the day will come when indeed He will have all things put under His feet. And the last word, "And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age." Precious promise to faith! He will never leave nor forsake, and He who is with us is the "I am," the mighty Jehovah, the Immanuel, having all power in heaven and on earth.

The Gospel of Matthew begins with Immanuel, "God with

us," it ends with Immanuel. With Him, our Saviour and Lord, we shall be in all eternity. Forever with the Lord. With all our hearts we praise God for such a Saviour, for such a Lord, for such a Gospel and for such a future with HIMSELF, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Our study is ended. We lay this work at His feet, and if it pleases Him to use it for the edification of His people, for the defence of the faith, above all for the PRAISE AND GLORY OF HIS ADORABLE NAME, we shall praise Him for it in all eternity, Amen and Amen.



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